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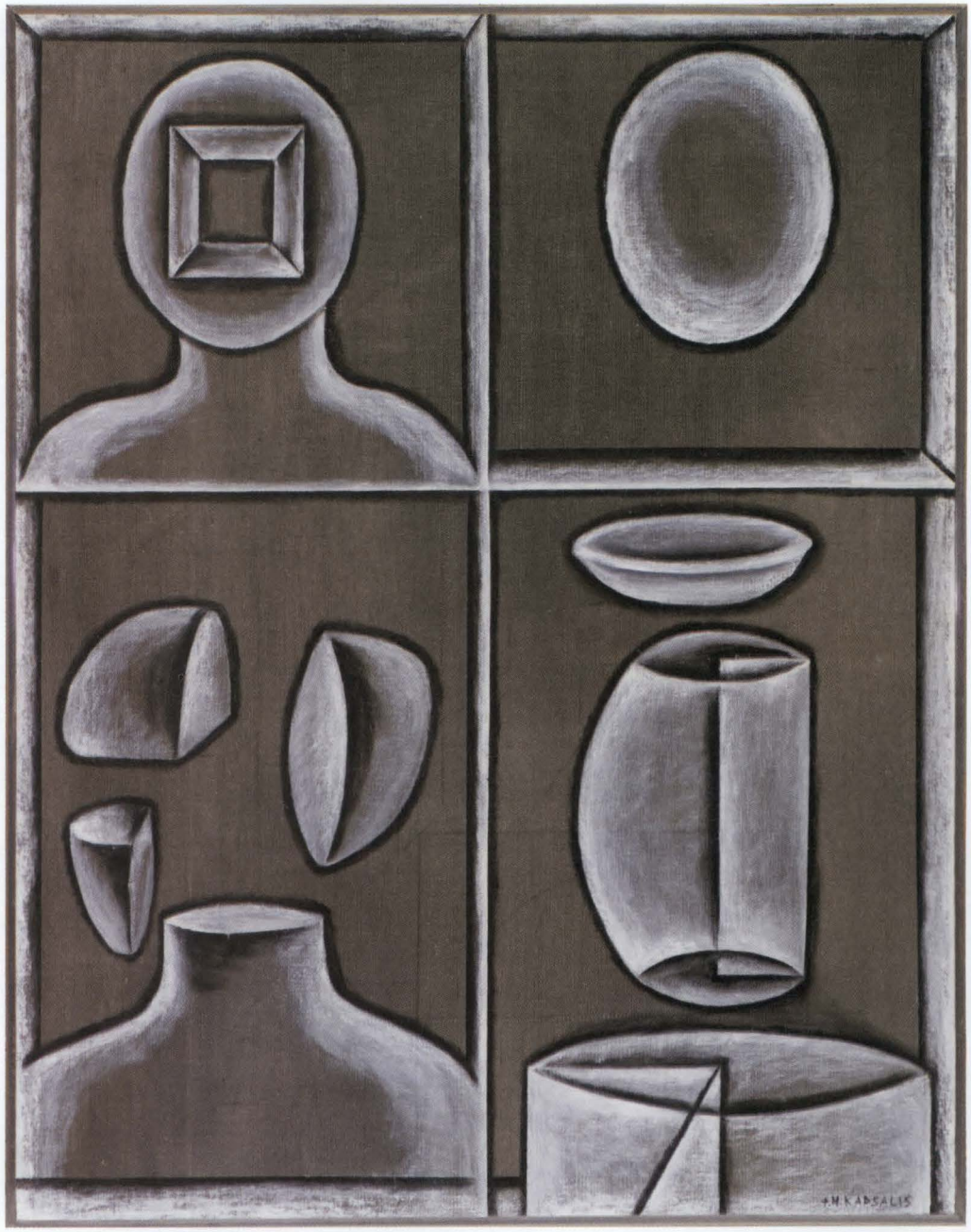
The Cresset (Vol. LXXIII, No. 2, Advent/Christmas)

Valparaiso University

THE CRESSET

A review of literature, the arts, and public affairs Advent-Christmas 2009



VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY
IN LUCE TUA VIDEMUS LUCEM
1859

www.valpo.edu/cresset

On the cover: Thomas H. Kapsalis (b. 1925). *Portraits, 1968.*
Oil on canvas board. Collection of the Artist

One of Chicago's greatest abstractionists, a Second World War veteran, and a respected educator, teaching at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago for more than fifty years, Thomas H. Kapsalis has inspired countless artists during his life and continues to engage viewers with his beautiful works. His paintings reflect a spirit of playful inventiveness (as can be seen in this image) that foreshadows the stylized creations of the Chicago Imagists, as well as an enduring interest in formal innovation related to Cubism and the Bauhaus. The Brauer Museum of Art is pleased to celebrate the accomplishments of this artist in a retrospective exhibition titled *Thomas H. Kapsalis: Artist's House, Paintings and Sculpture, 1947—2008*, curated by John Corbett and Jim Dempsey. The exhibition runs from 4 December 2009 through 21 March 2010 ad features more than forty major two and three-dimensional pieces from all stages of the artist's distinguished career. The pieces in the exhibit are drawn from the artist's collection and from respected public and private collections. Also featured are ephemeral items that relate to the artist's earlier group and solo exhibitions.

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THE CRESSET

Advent-Christmas • December 2009 • Volume LXXIII, No. 2

DEPARTMENTS

VERSE

BOOK REVIEWS

LILLY FELLOWS PROGRAM in HUMANITIES AND THE ARTS

Announcing the

Arlin G. Meyer Prize 2010

The National Network Board of the Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts is proud to announce the 2010 Arlin G. Meyer Prize in MUSIC PERFORMANCE

The Arlin G. Meyer Prize is awarded biennially to a fulltime faculty member from a college or university in the Lilly Fellows Program National Network. Work that exemplifies the practice of the Christian artistic or scholarly vocation in relation to any pertinent subject matter or literary and artistic style will be considered. The prize will be awarded in different years for works of creative imagination and for works of scholarship. The 2010 Arlin G. Meyer Prize will reward the conductor or performer of a musical work that emerges from his or her practice of the vocation of the Christian musician, in accord with the principles and ideals of the Lilly Fellows Program.

The Prize honors Arlin G. Meyer, Professor Emeritus of English at Valparaiso University, who served as program director of the Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts from its inception in 1991 until his retirement in 2002.

The 2010 Arlin G. Meyer Prize will be awarded to a full-time faculty member at a school in the Lilly Fellows Program National Network of Church-Related Colleges and Universities who has conducted or performed the musical work before a live audience in 2007, 2008, or 2009.

The Prize of $3000 will be awarded at the Lilly Fellows Program National Conference at Valparaiso University, October 15-17, 2010.

Nomination Procedure

1. Each Lilly Fellows Program National Network institution may nominate one faculty performer or conductor in the performance of one work for the 2010 Arlin G. Meyer Prize. The institution may select its nominee through any process.
2. The work must have been performed or conducted by a fulltime faculty member or administrator at a current Lilly Fellows Program National Network institution. The full-time faculty member may be a visiting faculty artist. If the nominee is a conductor or co-conductor, the performers may be any combination of faculty, students, guests, or community artists.
3. The music may represent any form or genre, including opera and musical theatre.
4. The work must have been performed during the calendar year 2007, 2008, or 2009.
5. A nomination must include:
   - A cover letter of nomination signed by one or both of the two official LFP representatives from the nominating institution
   - A statement or narrative of approximately 500 words explaining how the work exemplifies the practice of the Christian academic and artistic vocation
   - A CD, DVD, or VHS recording of the performance. This must be a live performance, not a studio recording
   - The nominee's curriculum vitae
6. Nominations must be sent to the LFP office at:
   Arlin G. Meyer Prize
   Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts
   Linwood House
   Valparaiso University
   Valparaiso, Indiana 46383
7. **Nomination deadline: March 1, 2010.** Nominations received after this date cannot be considered.

For more information, please visit: www.lillyfellows.org

Future subjects of the Arlin G. Meyer Prize: 2012 IMAGINATIVE LITERATURE

In Luce Tua
In Thy Light

Hope in the Darkness

Early winter can be such a dreary time. The little bit of sunshine we get each day here in northern Indiana is gone before I leave work. I step out of the office and into the cold, then drive home through dark streets littered with leaves rotting in the gutters. Weeks of fall rains have kept the sky gray and the ground sodden and made this year seem worse than normal. Winter, "...thy breath be rude," complained the Bard. Thank God for my neighbors' Christmas lights, shimmering strings of cheer along the way as I drive the streets near my house. (I'll get mine up soon. I promise.)

Maybe it's not just the weather that has me a bit down. The whole country seems out of sorts lately. There was a burst of optimism a year back—a million and a half people on the Washington Mall witnessing the inauguration of a new president and—they hoped—a new era in our politics. We were all looking for better things. A year later, all that enthusiasm seems to have been drained. Every weekend, I still see a crowd with signs outside the courthouse, protesting wars in far away places and the detention of prisoners without trial. On television, some pundits talk up the health care crisis; others fret about the growing budget deficit. We all worry about an economy that can't seem to turn the corner, about a new flu that won't go away, about our jobs and livelihoods.

But even with all these worries, we have to remind ourselves that this is the wrong mindset for this time of year. As dismal as things might seem, this is the season of Advent, a season of anticipation and hope. Though the world be filled with troubles and travails, though the times seem bleak and sad, in Advent there is hope in the darkest hour. This is the season when we prepare for the coming of Christ into the world, and when we are reminded that we live in anticipation of the time when Jesus will come again to redeem us all.

This issue of *The Cresset* has no particular theme that unites the three lead essays. Sometimes we just pick the best pieces in the queue and put them together. But as I read this set for the last time before going to press, I noticed one thing they do share, and this is that they are genuinely hopeful pieces. For those of us on university and college campuses, it's been a rough year of tight budgets and uncertain futures, yet Mark Schwehn's essay on "Lutheranism and the Future of the University" is resolutely, if modestly, optimistic about the future of higher education and the contribution that Lutheranism will make to it. In "Our Cylons, Ourselves," Christina Bieber Lake looks at a recent television series's sophisticated and compelling treatment of the challenges created by the ongoing biotechnical revolution. Much science fiction is pessimistic and dystopian. Since Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the moral almost always has been that humanity will lose control of the forces it releases into the world. But in this recent series, Lake finds a hopeful suggestion that this fate can be avoided, if we make the right choices. Lisa Deam's latest essay, "Faking It," is about the craft of history, which might not at first seem likely to say much about hope for the future. But Deam illustrates how historians—whose task it is to reconstruct the past—inevitably are tempted to embellish or even fabricate that past, and she is hopeful that they will do their work with integrity and truthfulness.

So we offer our own hope that the optimism of these essays can weigh just a bit against the darkness of the weather and the anxiety of the times. Children are rarely sad this time of year. They don't yet know what Advent is about, but they know that Santa is coming and he's bringing presents. Children long for Christmas morning with a fervor. We should all feel the same way this time of year.

—JPO

Lutheranism and the Future of the University

Mark R. Schwehn

The role that Lutheranism might play in helping both to shape and to secure the future of university education in this country will be very modest. We can be sure of this for at least three reasons. First, Lutheranism, like the world of the university, is itself undergoing a process of internal stress and dynamic change, some would say declension. We do not have, in other words, a small, stable, secure, and robust denominational formation that is somehow miraculously equipped to move an educational mountain. Second, the resolutely pluralistic character of American higher education, the source of much of its genius, precludes any one source of energy—economic, political, or ecclesiastical—from decisively shaping the whole.

Finally, we must all modestly admit that the university will endure in some form or another even if Lutheranism were magically to disappear tomorrow, however regrettable that might be. As one of my students wrote as the incontestable thesis sentence of the last paragraph of her honors thesis, "The future lies ahead." We now might add to that prescient remark by noting that the future of the university lies ahead, with or without Lutheranism. We cannot, in other words, be reminded enough of the well known historical fact that the university preceded Lutheranism by hundreds of years and in part gave rise to it. The university is one of the parents of Lutheranism, not *vice-versa*; however, it may well be time for the child to care for the aging parent in several crucially important ways.

The circumstances of Lutheranism's birth should also suggest to us both a starting point and a strategy for our own reflections. When Martin Luther posted his ninety-five theses on the door of the Castle Church in the university town of Wittenberg, he was performing a time-honored academic ritual. He was initiating an argument both within the university and within the church. And for many years after 1517, neither Luther nor his friends and colleagues, especially Philip Melanchthon, considered themselves anything other than critically loyal members of the church catholic and solid citizens of the university. Ever since that time, Lutheran thinking at its best has been thoughtfully engaged with the larger worlds of both church and academy. In other words (and I cannot stress this point enough), Lutheran universities cannot be true to the roots of their heritage unless they are themselves constituted by people of all faiths and backgrounds. We shall accordingly proceed to explore today's question of what Lutheranism might contribute to the future of the university by engaging others within the church catholic and by considering as well those of other world religions and those who are wholly secular.

One of the most impressive models of the kind of engagement I have just promised was published in 1992 when the late Jaroslav Pelikan, surely among the five or six most distinguished Lutheran scholars of the last century, examined the nature and purposes of the university through an extended consideration of the work of his equally distinguished Catholic predecessor, John Henry Cardinal Newman. Newman's lectures on the university,

published in the middle of the nineteenth century under the title *The Idea of the University*, have had an astonishingly durable influence upon the discourse, though not always upon the practices, of universities ever since. In the course of those lectures, Newman drew a hard and fast distinction between liberal learning and professional study, arguing that liberal learning sought knowledge for its own sake, whereas professional study sought knowledge for the sake of something else, e.g. for health or justice or commercial gain. Pelikan, as he typically did in dialogue with the great Cardinal, both agreed and disagreed with this distinction and with the sometimes disjointed academic practices that it justified or inspired.

"If the university understands the crisis in which it is living..." [we should note here that the university seems always in crisis] "...and if the university is the key to educational reform throughout the various societies in which it exists all over the world, the reexamination of the relation between its professional mission and its research and teaching in the faculty of arts and sciences may well be its most fundamental assignment." Having bestowed this task upon the university, Pelikan went on somewhat uncharacteristically to make a prediction. Noting the claim of the legal scholar Robert Stevens that there would someday be law schools that teach law in the framework of the social sciences and humanities, Pelikan insisted that such a new conceptual framework for law schools would sooner or later "call for a fundamental reorganization not only of professional schools but of the whole university."

Lutheranism, partly by virtue of its theological inheritance, partly by virtue of good fortune, finds itself at this moment in the history of the university in possession of both the best motive and the richest vocabulary for thinking through and perhaps accomplishing just such reorganization. I refer, of course, to the Lutheran concept of vocation, an idea whose time has come. When we see references to a sense of calling in Spiderman movies, when we view episodes of *CSI* or *House* that feature doctors or crime scene investigators holding one another accountable by invoking a proper sense of vocation, we can rest assured that an old theological idea has suddenly and strangely taken on a wider public provenance. Since our entire culture is awash in ideas of vocation, Lutheranism can best serve the university by first of all being true to its own nuanced and internally dynamic concept of vocation and by second applying the concept within its own institutions of higher learning in order to achieve some of the goals that Pelikan and others have set out for the university in general.

The internal dynamism of the idea of a calling comes from what Greg Jones, the Methodist dean of the Duke Divinity School, has described as four accounts of vocation, all of them within the Christian tradition, which must be held in tension (*The Cresset*, Trinity 2009). First, a genuine vocation keeps making more and more of those who are called and asking more and more of them. The hymn of the Iona community in Scotland sums up this idea nicely as follows: "Take, oh take me as I am; summon out what I shall be." Those who are called are on this account wooed into an adventure that enlarges their spirits. But a calling often wounds as much as it lures. The second idea of vocation within the Christian tradition is summed up by Dietrich Bonhoeffer who once wrote, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." And Luther argued that we will experience little crucifixions in our vocations, not a happy thought for those in thrall to that aspect of American popular culture that holds out the promise of superficial but transient happiness through sensual pleasures. This second account of vocation holds out the promise of a deep joy in life that is consistent with suffering, the kind of joy that Fredrick Buechner, a Calvinist thinker, had in mind when he defined vocation as the place where our deep gladness meets the world's deep hunger. This third understanding of vocation reminds us that we fully find ourselves in our efforts to minister to the needs of others. Finally, lest we think that vocation refers to some grand design we make for ourselves during our college or university years, we come to the fourth dimension of vocation that Jones captured in the familiar aphorism, "If you want to make God laugh, tell God your plans." In other words, be

faithful in the work that is set before you today, and leave the rest to God.

Our students today are a diverse bunch. Some have known for years what they will do to earn a living, and they come to our universities to prepare themselves to do that. If and when those plans are disappointed, these students must still have a calling, for the time as a student, later in unexpected avenues of exertion. Other students have no idea what they wish to do to earn a living and come to our universities simply to prepare for life rather than a livelihood. These students nevertheless will find themselves stationed somewhere soon, as a parent, a citizen, an employee, a friend, a neighbor. And it will be in one or another or several of just these places, not somewhere else, that they will be both wooed and wounded.

> Vocation has the capacity to imbue those who are called with a sense of responsibility, with an ethical dimension to their actions in the world; the liberal arts have the potential to render action in the public domain reasonable, articulate, and effective.

Vocation, because it involves on the one hand matters of identity and destiny, questions of who we are and why we are here and what we might become, belongs to the discourse of liberal education. But because vocation also involves a summons to particular kinds of work in the world, it belongs as well to the discourse of the professions. Indeed, the idea of vocation, rightly understood, cuts across the domains of the social sciences and humanities, the performing arts, and the learned professions. And it should enable schools like many Lutheran schools, by virtue of their theological inheritance, relatively small size, and attendant flexible resourcefulness, to set an example for the entire academy by responding to the challenges that Pelikan in his conversation with Newman set before the university, a task of re-conceptualizing and reorganizing the way students are invited to study and learn and grow.

The connections between the learned professions and the liberal arts have, of course, been present from the beginning of the university, and some of those early connections are worth retaining and reinforcing regardless of what new forms of study might emerge. Whereas Newman tended to stress the differences between these two domains, other Christians have stressed the crucial importance of liberal learning for professional life. When the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, delivered the Oxford University Commemoration Day Sermon some five years ago, he noted that Oxford was founded in order to prepare canon lawyers and that for centuries its survival depended upon its continued capacity to form people whose job was to govern the kingdom. Crucial to that formation, he suggested, was the *trivium*, a part of the curriculum taught by the arts faculty. Many students today may not have heard of the *trivium*, but they are nevertheless familiar with it in a different curricular configuration. The *trivium* refers simply to those arts and skills of interpretation, analysis, criticism, and expression that enable us to understand a variety of texts, to distinguish good arguments from bad ones, to use language precisely and effectively, and to communicate with others in well reasoned speech.

The importance of these arts and skills for life in today's world cannot be exaggerated. A part of my work when I was dean of Valparaiso University's honors college involved my annual meeting with our National Council, a group composed primarily of alumni, most of whom are doctors, lawyers, businessmen and women, engineers, nurses, and judges. One year I asked them whether the college should focus more on experiential learning and pre-professional education or whether it should continue to concentrate upon teaching students to read closely, to speak carefully and thoughtfully, and to write clearly

and fluently. For once, their answer was unanimous. "We owe our professional skills to our professional schools, even more to our first years on the job, but we owe our positions of leadership, our effectiveness in our respective professions, to the fact that we learned how to read, to reason well, to speak well, and to write well."

Archbishop Williams used much of his sermon to lament the loss of Oxford's erstwhile commitment to this task of preparing people to assume responsible positions of leadership through the effective use of these several arts. When Oxford and the other great medieval universities were founded, society was of course governed by kings and princes and royal counselors. Today, in this country at least, citizens ideally govern one another, and their claim to authority in the public realm rests on nothing more or less than their capacity to contribute to the public good through the use of reasoned speech. "The university should exist," said Williams,

> ...to create "public people"—people who, whatever their specialty, are committed not only to reasoned argument, but to a responsibility to the ideal of rational governance and rational public discourse. A student at the university may be working in Modern Languages, Biochemistry, Business Studies, or Media Studies; but, so the history of the universities might suggest to us, he or she ought above all to be developing a vigorous sense of good argument and of the risks in the public sphere of shoddy and manipulative language, a sense of the importance and the vulnerability of reasoned conversation for a just common life. They should be developing a skeptical eye for the demagogue, the columnist, the campaigning obsessive, for those who dogmatize beyond their proper skills.

If Williams is correct that universities have gradually abdicated this aspect of their calling, Lutheranism might well act to retard such an alarming development, even to reverse the current trend. Higher education's largest national organization, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, has been for several years promoting education for citizenship of the sort that Williams recommended. The results thus far, though sometimes impressive, have been decidedly mixed. Large public universities seem increasingly driven by social and economic imperatives external to them to develop highly specialized courses of study and research, leading to the same situation in this country that Williams was lamenting across the Atlantic. By contrast, and again in part because of their relatively small size and their focus upon undergraduate education, Lutheran colleges and universities can and do train young men and women in the very arts once encompassed by the *trivium*.

And Lutherans have a historical and a theological warrant for providing today just such an education as the one Williams recommends, a precedent dating back to the time that Lutheranism was born. Philip Melanchthon, a close associate of Luther's and himself a professor at the University of Wittenberg, mounted an extensive defense of the liberal arts as gifts from God. "If the liberal arts were to be consigned to oblivion and annihilated it would be sadder than if the sun were taken from the world," he wrote. And because he understood that Christian vocation involved faith active in love, belief engaged with the world, he always regarded the liberal arts as being *both* good in themselves *and* good for the sake of public life. Indeed, he added history to the curriculum of the university, a course of study that was not part of the *trivium*, precisely because he believed that knowledge of the past was essential to acting well and effectively in the future. Vocation has the capacity to imbue those who are called with a sense of responsibility, with an ethical dimension to their actions in the world; the liberal arts have the potential to render action in the public domain reasonable, articulate, and effective.

We are at this point beginning to discern the outlines of an answer to our opening question about the relationship between Lutheranism and the future of the university. Lutheranism, rightly understood as part of the church catholic, might fortify from the treasures of its own tradition

some of the best but now imperiled practices that have characterized its own parent, the university, over the years, even as it reconfigures some of those practices for the sake of equipping young men and women to assume positions of leadership in the twenty-first century.

It is salutary to realize, as we feel the sands shifting beneath our feet, that the university in the West has survived at least four fundamental, one might even say cataclysmic, changes since the twelfth century and has retained many of its most vital characteristics.

Are there any other practices or virtues, once thought essential to a university education, that are in need of fortification or renewal today, we might ask? A year before Archbishop Williams delivered his sermon at Oxford, David Ford, another Anglican and the Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University delivered a lecture entitled, "Knowledge, Meaning, and the World's Great Challenges: Reinventing Cambridge University in the Twenty-first Century." From Ford's vantage point, writing in 2003, Cambridge already had reinvented itself at least four times since the foundational Medieval pattern: once in the aftermath of Renaissance and Reformation learning, a second time after the rise of Newtonian mathematics and science, a third time with the nineteenth and twentieth century explosion of disciplines and subdisciplines in the arts, humanities, and especially the sciences and technology, and a fourth time, as yet imperfectly understood, with the rise of the enterprise or entrepreneurial university. Though the Lutheran colleges and universities in the US have known at most only two of these changes, it is salutary to realize, as we feel the sands shifting beneath our feet, that the university in the West has survived at least four fundamental, one might even say cataclysmic, changes since the twelfth century and has retained many of its most vital characteristics.

Indeed, Ford maintained that certain intellectual ideals, very much like those that were later stressed by Archbishop Williams, remained intact throughout the course of all of the upheavals he had summarized. Foremost among them were those values at the heart of education and research, namely "truth-seeking, rationality in argument, balanced judgment, integrity, linguistic precision, and critical questioning." Ford argued further that the continued thriving of these values was intrinsically linked to the quality of collegiality within the university. "Because these socially-embedded values aim at knowledge and understanding that are cumulative, and in principle unlimited in breadth and depth, they are served best by long term collegial settings dedicated to their practice," he wrote. In other words, the character and durability of the community of faculty, students, and staff at a university is integrally linked to the quality of the thinking that will take place within it.

Though Ford had much to celebrate about Cambridge's past and its prospects for the future, he closed his lecture with a lamentation, just as his co-religionist Williams would a year later. He argued that the university today needs wisdom above all of the other moral and intellectual virtues. "Wisdom is not only desirable when we think about the university's future; it is classically the most comprehensive ideal of education, beyond information, knowledge, practice, and skills. The goal is to unite knowledge and understanding with imagination, good judgment, and decision-making in life and work." But if wisdom is so sorely needed, Ford wondered, why had the statement of core values for the University of Cambridge, adopted by its regents in 2001, altogether omitted any reference to religion? After all, so he argued, neither the university nor the nation nor the world can be called simply secular or simply religious. And if wisdom is the supreme intellectual virtue, it seems (if I may use the word) unwise to exclude the world's religions

as primary sources of wisdom within the discourse of the academy. "Surely," Ford concluded, "our reinvention as a global university for the twenty-first century should involve a collegiality to which both those who are wisely religious and those who are wisely secular are encouraged to contribute."

Lutheran colleges and universities should by nature strive for just such collegiality. This is not simply a matter or assembling on one fair campus human beings from many religious backgrounds. Nor is it a matter of teaching world religions in a series of religious studies courses, as important as this might be. It is rather a matter of providing for, even insisting upon, sustained communal conversation between religious people and secular people about the most important questions and challenges facing the globe today. Such conversation, where the various religions become active sources of wisdom and reflection rather than mere objects of study, is comparatively rare in our culture, but it is desperately needed for all kinds of reasons too obvious to innumerate here. And Lutheranism, a religious movement that was itself conceived and born in a university, should be the ideal host for just such ongoing collegiality.

Lutheranism, perhaps more than any other part of the church catholic, has held both the religious and the secular in high regard. Human institutions, like universities, are part of the design whereby God continues to exercise God's providential care for the world, and within the earthly or the secular realm we are to use our gifts of reason and the civic virtues to provide for human flourishing. Christian cobblers, like their secular counterparts, are to make good shoes, not bad shoes with little crosses on them. Christian physicists, again like their secular counterparts, are to write excellent physics papers, not sloppy physics papers closed with a prayer. And so we come to yet a fourth contribution that Lutheranism might make to the continued flourishing of the university: the preservation and celebration of a robust secularity as a check against religious fanaticism and anti-intellectualism.

The Catholic philosopher Charles Taylor has gone so far as to suggest that at various times in human history, certain facets of the Christian life were advanced more effectively and taken even further under secular auspices than they were under the guidance of Christendom itself. Christendom should not, in this formulation, be confused with the Christian gospel itself. Christendom refers to the effort to "marry the faith to a form of culture and a mode of society." The Christian gospel inspired an ethic of agape, of unconditional love, even of enemies. According to Taylor, much of modern liberal political culture, including especially the affirmation of universal human rights as radically unconditional, arose in opposition to Christendom even though the achievement of these rights represented an extension of the gospel ethic into public affairs.

A more familiar example of this salutary dialectic between the secular and the religious involves the achievement of academic freedom or freedom of inquiry. Christendom itself has from time to time notoriously sought to discourage, even to prevent, scientific inquiry of one kind or another. At the same time, the Christian gospel rightly understood provides a more secure foundation for academic freedom than almost any other source. For Lutherans at least, reason should reign supreme so long as it remains within its proper bounds, so long as its own ambitions do not corrupt our relationship with God. As Luther famously said, we are saved by grace, not by works, including the works of the intellect. Since our salvation is in no way contingent upon how well we do math or chemistry or literary criticism, we are all the more free to venture boldly within these domains, depending completely upon our God-given rational powers as those powers are exercised within the secular academic disciplines.

The third and the fourth contributions of Lutheranism that I have been discussing here really belong together as the two sides of a well worn Lutheran dialectic. Secularity, one might say, can take care of itself very well; it hardly needs Lutheranism to strengthen it. True enough, but left to its own designs the secular academy has gradually cut itself off from religious sources of

wisdom that could nourish and properly direct the powers of reason itself. Religion on the other hand, left to its own designs, can become institutionalized in forms like Christendom, can become a source of oppression rather than liberation, and can become as well a dangerous foe of reason itself. Consider Lutheranism and Protestantism more generally. There is a direct line of descent from Luther's own terrible and violent anti-Judaic outbursts in the sixteenth century to the exclusionary or discriminatory admissions policies applied to Jews in this country at many of our most prestigious private universities up until the middle of the last century, all of them under the influence of the Protestant establishment.

Lutheranism's contribution to the university today will simply be its continued insistence that Enlightenment needs religion in order to be fully itself, just as religion needs Enlightenment as a check against some of its potentially self-destructive and lethal tendencies.

A robust secularity has been and may well continue to be the best corrective to these corrosive and oppressive religious tendencies. Lutheranism's contribution to the university today, chastened as many Lutherans have been by the acknowledgement of their own complicity in some of the most terrible deeds of the last century, will simply be its continued insistence that Enlightenment needs religion in order to be fully itself, just as religion needs Enlightenment as a check against some of its potentially self-destructive and lethal tendencies. Or, as Ford put it, "our reinvention as a global university for the twenty-first century should involve a collegiality to which both those who are wisely religious and those who are wisely secular are encouraged to contribute." This is, as we should see by now, a very Lutheran recommendation.

We have thus far been considering Lutheranism and the future of the university in conversation with two Catholics—Newman and Taylor—and two Anglicans—Williams and Ford. I should note that in our own time these various communions have moved steadily closer to one another, and all of them were of course vitally involved in the development of the modern university. We have time to propose only one more potential Lutheran contribution to the continued flourishing of the university, and in order to consider this one, we shall turn to the thought of Martin Luther himself.

When we earlier listed the several intellectual values that, according to David Ford, have constituted the university through all of its various iterations, we failed to pay special attention to the value at the top of the list, namely "truth-seeking." This particular value has come in for some rough sledding during the latter part of the twentieth century. A congeries of academic movements, collectively known as post-modernism cast deep doubt upon the possibility of truth-seeking as a value. Some stressed the fact that we are all situated within thickly described social, biological, and cultural contexts, blinded by some of them because we are often unaware of their constraining hold upon us. Race, class, gender, religion, language, age, nationality, and many other such aspects of our being necessarily shape the way we see the world. We cannot have unmediated access to reality. There may be truth, but it is highly doubtful that any of us can find it.

Others have taken a still more radical position, suggesting that there is no truth to be found. Truth is a fiction, so the argument has gone, and disagreements over alleged truths are only settled through power struggles, not rational discourse, which merely disguises what is actually going on. Human beings may "make" truth, but they never find it. The made truth that prevails among us

belongs to those with the strongest battalions. Truth-seeking is therefore a snare and a delusion. We can have only invention, never genuine discovery. We are captured by language, trapped in our cultures, forced to play power games that we sometimes vainly imagine are quests for the truth of matters.

It may well be that the post-modern moment already has passed. All kinds of voices within the secular academy have been convincingly raised against the most extreme versions of it. Moreover, it was really a movement contained for the most part within certain limited precincts of the academy. Eventually, academics figured out that universities were not simply cultural studies departments writ large, and much of the fretting over post-modernism abated. Nevertheless, deep skepticism about the powers of human reason to discover truth or about whether there is any truth to be found is bound to recur in the future, often crippling at least some of university life at its very foundations. More seriously still, popular culture has now been infected with weaker varieties of this virus: an often careless version of moral and epistemological relativism and several versions of identity politics that reduce people's views without remainder to their gender group, their ethnic group, or their social class. Yesterday's suspicious academic is today's spin doctor.

Luther would have been the first to insist, were he alive today, that there was a great deal to recommend post-modernism. Few thinkers of his age were as suspicious of the claims of reason as he was. We live, he thought, in a state of permanent estrangement from the source of all truth, Almighty God. And even within the realms of human life where reason should hold sovereign sway, its exercise is invariably tainted by self-seeking, self-deception, and overweening confidence in reason's powers of discernment. It is not much of a stretch to claim that Luther was a post-modern before his time.

But Luther was also a Bible scholar, and his favorite gospel was the Gospel of John. That book begins with the great hymn to the logos: "In the beginning was the Word." Before the earth was formed, long before human life began, there was order, rationality, pattern, and design built into the very fabric of the universe itself. It may well be impossible for unaided human reason, whose puny powers are so often corroded by self-deception, to discover the logos, to find the truth. But there most certainly is truth to be found. Moreover, Truth with a capital "T" finds us out before we find it. But there are many little truths, faint images of the fullness of Truth, which we can and do discover every day within colleges and universities and outside of them as well. Indeed, such truth-seeking and truth-finding is part of what it means to be made in the image of God. And this explains perhaps why Lutheranism is not ashamed to use the language of longing, even of love, to characterize our proper relationship to truth. So too with many others, secular and religious alike.

Regardless of whether or not one accepts Luther's theology or his metaphysics, one might well accept, as a matter of hope, Lutheranism's distinctive combination of skepticism and trust, skepticism about the adequacy of the powers of human reason to grasp the truth, trust in the ultimate rationality of the universe. This complicated attitude toward the world modestly sustains truth-seeking as an intellectual value. And it does so in part by imbuing truth seekers with the virtue of genuine humility. All scholars are humbled by the daily discovery of the ever increasing dimensions of their own ignorance. Lutherans realize that even if they had all knowledge, such knowledge would avail them nothing as they stand before God. As we have seen so often before, with respect to truth-seeking Lutheranism can help to fortify and sustain what has been from the beginning of its history a defining feature of university life at its best.

And there is one thing more here: Luther loved the arts, especially music. And Lutheranism has proudly carried on this tradition throughout its history. We often discover beauty as we often discover truth. But beauty, unlike truth, may be more often made than found. Again, to be fashioned in God's image is in part to share in God's creative powers. Our poets, composers, dramatists, painters, photographers, actors, and musicians know that creative power every day and often display it for us. This is surely a vitally

important contribution of Lutheranism to the academy: to insist that the arts always have a privileged place within it. For if we do not cultivate the imagination in order to bring more beauty into the world, we may imagine that we should be making truth instead. Cultivating both imagination and reason in the university should ensure that neither one of these two very different powers of the mind is usurped by or collapsed into the other one.

We have suggested five contributions that Lutheranism in general and Lutheran academies in particular might make to the university: the concept of vocation as a source of educational innovation; a renewed attention to practices of the arts and sciences as preparations of public people whose authority is based in their capacity for reasoned speech; an insistence upon the full inclusion of living embodiments of the world's religions as sources of wisdom; a deep appreciation for secularity at its best; and an attitude of humble but expectant truth-seeking and beauty-making. We have construed these five contributions as Lutheranism's way of serving and honoring its ancient parent, the university. We honor our parents in their old age by caring for their health and well being even as we continue to enjoy the life and legacy that they have given to us, most especially when we build upon that legacy through creative innovations that grow out of the tradition that our parents embodied.

The vocation of Lutheranism with respect to the university, we have been arguing, might well lie in its obedience to this metaphorical version of the fourth commandment: honor thy father and thy mother that it may be well with thee and that thou mayest live long upon the earth. We should resist pushing any metaphor too far, but we may at least suggest in closing that a long and healthy life for Lutheranism may well in part depend upon how credibly and how well we at Lutheran colleges and universities serve our aging parent, the university itself, and beyond that the larger public life around the globe that will continue to look to the university for the knowledge, the wisdom, the skills, and the virtues that it needs to flourish.

We do well to draw such a charge and such a sense of vocation from the first commandment in the second table of the Law. The first table, the first three commandments, has to do with the human relationship to the divine. The second table, the last seven commandments, has to do with our relationships to one another—to family, to fellow citizens, and to neighbors around the globe. A university is not a church. As such, its vocation should be derived from the commandments that govern its relationship to the world and that are part and parcel of many religious and secular moral traditions. And in seeking, as a part of Lutheranism, to honor its aging parent in the many ways we have seen, it honors itself.

A Lutheran university is a house of learning, if you will, where metaphorical parents and children live together in harmony, and it will share with all universities a love for and the pursuit of those goods internal to itself like truth and beauty, research and scholarship, teaching and learning. Unlike some sectarian colleges and universities, a Lutheran house of learning will be a place of open doors to all who wish to teach and study here. Unlike some secular universities, a Lutheran one will be a house that keeps the window to the transcendent open, that holds out the prospect that there may be goods and truths that go even beyond human flourishing. This will be a difficult household of learning to manage. The balances are sometimes too fine and too precarious to maintain. Lutheranism would also insist, however, that the destiny of a university is not finally in its own hands. Hope, gratitude, and prayer are also important virtues and practices at a Lutheran university.

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Faking It

Fact and Fiction in the Presentation of the Past

Lisa Deam

One evening not long after my daughter was born, I got out of the house and attended a crop—a gathering of people who work on their scrapbooks. During show and tell time, one of the veteran scrapbookers, whose name was Helen, held up a page from her album. The page featured her young daughter sneaking into the cookie jar. On her page, Helen had written out the lyrics to the children's song, "Who Stole the Cookie from the Cookie Jar?" Accompanying the lyrics were three photographs that showed, in turn, her daughter approaching a cookie jar on the kitchen counter, reaching her hand into the jar, and, finally, extracting a cookie. Helen's page inspired me, especially since I recently had become a parent. I thought it provided a good lesson in memorializing the type of mischief my own daughter soon would be getting into.

After the group oohed and aahed over the page, Helen dropped a bomb. She admitted that she had made the whole thing up. Her daughter did not, in fact, steal a cookie from the cookie jar, at least, not on this occasion. Helen described how she had staged each photograph, telling her daughter how to pose and then snapping the shots because she knew that they would make a memorable page in her album.

Helen's story bothered me, and I knew that my training as an art historian was the reason. Historians are taught that it is unethical to make up events. Even when we wish that something had happened—it would clinch our argument, perhaps, or tie the chaos of the past into a neat little bow—we don't say that it did. Yet Helen admitted to doing precisely that. And her invention was fairly egregious. Helen did not, in her scrapbook page, merely fill in details missing from her memory of the cookie jar episode. She did not enhance the episode by making it seem more exciting or dramatic. These kinds of embellishments might have been acceptable. Instead, Helen made up an event out of whole cloth and then enshrined it as history. I feared that she had broken the unwritten historian's oath: do no harm to the past.

But here's the thing: Helen's page told a great story. It was the kind of story that makes the past come alive, the kind with which parents like to embarrass their children later in their lives. And she had designed the layout of the page with care, so that it had visual appeal. She even had printed the photographs in sepia tones (which, incidentally, gave them an aura of historical authenticity). I wished that I had her evident talent at putting together a scrapbook page. My other scrapbook friends also admired Helen's work. What is more, none of them seemed bothered by the niggling detail that she had chronicled a fictional event.

The reaction of my friends, as well as my own admiration for Helen's page, cast doubt on my initial assessment. Was Helen on to something? Does invention have a place in the chronicling of the past? These questions caused me to reevaluate what I believe about history. They led me to a group of historians whom I know quite well and who prompted me to consider whether I, too, might remake the past to my own advantage.

In one sense, most of us remake the past on a regular basis. The camera, so ubiquitous today that it often doubles as a telephone, makes everyone an historian. As we point and shoot for posterity's sake, many of us get the niggling feeling that we never will be able to capture an event exactly as it happened or even as we remember it—we simply are unable to. And sometimes we don't want to. Before and after we take our photographs, most of us choose to doctor them in some way. We pose them, frame then, Photoshop them, and then select the ones that will make it into the public version of our past.

The past does not present itself whole for our inspection; as historians, we have to use our techniques, our skills, and our judgment to piece together and make sense of its fragments. At the same time, we usually are trying very hard to convince an audience that we have interpreted these fragments correctly.

I am unlikely, for example, to include in my scrapbook any pictures of my infant daughter screaming (her favorite activity the first few months of her existence). I will stick to the shots in which she sleeps and coos like an angel. The official pictorial record of my daughter's life will, therefore, not conform to the past as I experienced it. I take history into my own hands to an even greater degree when I direct my daughter's activities with an eye toward taking her picture. When I snap some shots of her playing with her ball, a part of me knows that she might not have played with it *in just this way* if I, camera in hand, had not prompted her. *Hold it up! Now throw it—no, not over there, toward the camera!* But my photographs—the historical record—will give the illusion that no such intervention influenced her play. I do not feel badly about directing the course of events in this way because, as a student of the visual arts, I know that photographs never mirror reality, no matter how hard we try to make them do so. It isn't in the nature of the medium.

When I write about the visual arts, however—when I put on my "serious historian" hat and produce an art historical text—I like to think that I can get my mirror accurately to reflect their historical context. But here, too, invention not so subtly creeps in. The past does not present itself whole for our inspection. As historians, we have to use our techniques, our skills, and our judgment to piece together and make sense of its fragments. At the same time, we usually are trying very hard to convince an audience that we have interpreted these fragments correctly. Every time an historian does this—every time she speculates, fills in gaps, or marshals evidence to support an argument—she noodles around with "what really happened." Some philosophers of history would go further and say that the past—even last year, even yesterday—exists only in our invention of it in the written word.

When I was in graduate school, I used to play a little game that bears out this point. While working on my dissertation, I would stop and ask myself whether I could imagine making an entirely different argument, using the same data I had at hand. Essentially, I staged mental historical debates. Somewhat surprisingly (given my wholehearted investment in the thesis of my dissertation), I usually could imagine arguing the opposite point of view and arguing it convincingly. Each interpretation of the evidence, I realized, would make the past anew; it would reinvent it.

Of course, there still would seem to be a big difference between inventing the past through arguments and reconstructions and inventing the past through making things up. Perhaps we cannot get at "what really happened." Perhaps we have to help the past along in all kinds of

ways. But we do not outright *fake* the past, as my friend Helen did. Every serious historian I know would frown upon the wholesale invention of a fact or an event. It simply isn't done.

But it has been done before and by historians I admire. They just don't happen to be *living* historians. They themselves are part of history, and they remind us that the taboo against invention is largely a modern one, based upon what we think history is and what it does. I know full well that if I had fabricated the events I chronicled in my doctoral dissertation, I would not have earned my degree. But if I had lived a mere seven hundred years ago, I would have. In the Middle Ages—the very period on which I wrote my dissertation—the crafting of history followed different rules than it does today. It was closer in spirit to Helen's cookie jar page.

When I wrote academic art history articles, I often felt that I was sending them into the void. They looked good on my c.v., but I did not know who, if anyone, read them. Nor did I write them for the benefit of a particular person or group. I wrote history that interested me but that remained, in the final analysis, disinterested. This is the kind of history my training taught me to write. A medieval chronicle, by contrast, often was written within and for a community—a family, a society, or a nascent country. Within this community, it frequently was intended for a specific person, often a ruler—although other people also read it—and the historian himself formed part of the same community, if not always the same social class. Medieval history did not merely or even primarily document facts. It created, cemented, and celebrated ties. Perhaps for this reason, it could be rife with invention. It resembles nothing so much as the tales told by a family gathered around the hearth on a cold winter night. And, as every family knows, many of these tales—*in my day, we walked three miles each way to school, and it was uphill both ways!*—must be taken with several large grains of salt.

One of my favorite medieval "families" is that of Philip the Good, third Valois duke of Burgundy (1419–1467). Philip, an ambitious French prince, spent most of his career fashioning himself as the "Grand Duke of the West" and seeking the independence of the Burgundian state. His dreams of Burgundy's future led him to the past. While not an author himself, the duke commissioned numerous histories that chronicled the origins and development of his territories. His highly ambitious claims make for enjoyable reading today.

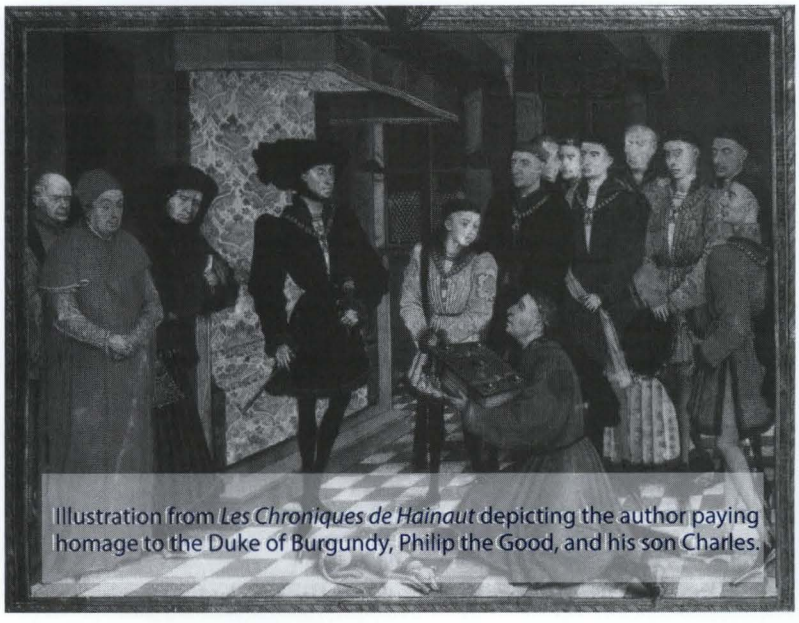

Illustration from *Les Chroniques de Hainaut* depicting the author paying homage to the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, and his son Charles.

Like many European rulers, Philip the Good was obsessed with ancestry and traced his family tree as far back as possible. One of his most illustrious histories, the *Chroniques de Hainaut*, gave him a Trojan pedigree. The *Chroniques* relates that Bavo, cousin to King Priam of Troy, set sail after the fall of the city and became the first duke of Burgundy when he founded the city of Bavais in Hainaut. With this story, Philip could compete with the French monarchy, the first to claim descent from Trojan royalty. Philip even tried to best the French by having his foundation story included in another of his chronicles, the *Fleur des Histoires*, a universal

history that relates historical events from the creation to the year 1422. Universal histories of the Middle Ages look to God as the primary explanatory factor for historical events. The Fleur thus carried the implicit argument that the Creator himself had ordained the foundation of an independent Burgundian state.

As venerable as was the Trojan foundation legend, Philip doubtlessly would have been even more pleased to read the report of court memoirist Olivier de la Marche, who, after the duke's death, reiterated an older claim that the Burgundian line sprang from none other than Hercules. On his way to Spain, the story went, Hercules married a Burgundian noblewoman named Alise, and their union produced the first "Roys de Bourgoingne." With this tale, Philip was promoted to the ranks of the truly heroic, perhaps even the deified.

These competing claims—which, thankfully for the duke and his descendants, few if any contemporaries attempted to reconcile—seem to us to be bits of fantasy difficult to fathom in a serious history. But Philip the Good took his history quite seriously. He recognized that almost as much as military conquest, the right genealogy could uphold a ruler's territorial claims. Thus he and his heirs became descendants of both the Trojan nobility and a demigod, along the way claiming other kinds of ties to such heroes as Alexander the Great, Jason the Argonaut and the Old Testament judge Gideon. With its fantastic array of forebears, Burgundian historiography is in many ways a larger-than-life celebration of Philip's family tree—like a good scrapbook ratcheted up a few levels.

We perhaps could excuse Philip's chroniclers at least some of their grandiosity since they wrote about distant events. They faced gaps in the historical record the size of which allowed a fair amount of speculation. But even recent events could inspire medieval historians to flights of silver-tongued fancy. A good example can be found in the *Chroniques* of fourteenth-century historian Jean Froissart. The *Chroniques* purport to give a mostly eyewitness account of events surrounding the Hundred Years War in France and England. In Froissart's own words, he sets out to record honorable adventures and noble feats of arms "so that whoever reads or hears this work may find in it both pleasure and good example" (Froissart 1968, 3).

Froissart at first appears to be a conscientious fact checker, sometimes letting the reader in on his research process. The *Chroniques*' third volume, for example, opens with Froissart's journey to the castle of the count of Foix, Gaston Fébus, located in Béarn. Froissart traveled there to gather eyewitness testimony about the wars in the Iberian Peninsula. After his arrival, he narrates what has become one of the *Chroniques*' most memorable accounts. Froissart writes that, while resident at Gaston's court, he read aloud nightly, over a period of about twelve weeks, from his Arthurian romance, *Meliador*. He is self-evidently proud of the respect his performance commanded:

> The count was pleased by it [*Meliador*], and every night after supper I used to read part of it aloud, amid complete silence, so keen was the count's interest. When he wanted to discuss a particular point in it, he would talk to me in good French, and not in his native Gascon. (Froissart 1968, 283)

Froissart here inserts himself into the events that he chronicles. He becomes an historical player, a hero who will be remembered for his role in court pageantry as much as for his work recording other heroes' quests.

At least one contemporary historian, however, believes Froissart's account of this dramatic reading to be fictitious (Diller 1998). Too many inconsistencies with other historical records indicate that Froissart created it as a literary device. He also may have invented the informant with whom he reported traveling to Béarn and from whom he supposedly gleaned a good many of his facts about the region's history.

I find it deliciously ironic that Froissart fabricated events embedded in a larger narrative

of a fact-finding mission. Froissart checked his facts, but sometimes he checked them at the door. Fabricating events did not deter him from pursuing what he earnestly calls "the truth about matters" (Froissart 1968, 282). The funny thing is, I believe that Froissart did tell the truth—at least, the truth as his contemporaries would have understood it. A truthful historical account, in Froissart's time, made events memorable; it chronicled "what could have happened" or "what should have happened" instead of the much poorer version of "what actually happened." And as both Froissart and Philip the Good show, this version of truth frequently served a larger goal: that of locating one's self or one's family (however extended) in the vast web of history.

I understand this goal. I understand it because I spent five years researching my doctoral dissertation on a chronicle written and illustrated for Philip the Good. My research convinced me that the goal of medieval historians—to find themselves in the past—transcends historical time and place. As I wrote my dissertation, I myself became enamored of the duke's vision of history. I admired his boldness in claiming pretty much whatever he chose about the past, not to mention his ability to get away with it. Even as I followed all the scholarly rules documenting his approach to history, I secretly wanted it for myself. Who does not sometimes want to rewrite events, even the small ones, in order to transform a "should have happened" into a "did happen?" Who does not wish to see herself placed amidst the pageantry of history unfurling around her?

Perhaps all historians do. Taming the past in order to tame ourselves might be the reason many of us do history in the first place—only we usually are bound by rules that do not let our desires become translated onto the page. Scrapbookers certainly want this version of history. And, not beholden to the conventions of academe, they have found a way to get it. They have tapped into the mindset of the Middle Ages—not consciously, perhaps, but in practice. My friend Helen, with her fictional cookie jar story, reminds me in many ways of a Philip the Good or a Jean Froissart. Her motivation for doing history closely mirrors their own. When she made her scrapbook page, Helen did not set out factually to document an event. Instead, she wanted to tell a story about the past. Like Philip the Good, she wanted it to be a little larger than life. Like Froissart, she wanted it to be memorable. Since so much of what happens in the past is neither of these things, Helen went and made the past her own.

Statue of Jean Froissart at the Louvre, Paris.

I wondered if I could do the same in my own scrapbook. The stakes were not high—if I

chose not to tell anyone, who would know but me?—and I would have the chance to rewrite history any way I liked. One day, I got my opportunity to find out. On one of the rare occasions my infant daughter stopped screaming and took a nap, I observed her sleeping with one arm raised over her head. I reached for my camera, for her gesture was one I habitually had made as a baby—almost. My baby book reveals that I used to sleep with my arm thrown over my eyes. I saw immediately what I could do: I could reposition my daughter's arm so that it lay over her own eyes and take her picture. I could then make a scrapbook page that featured her photograph and my baby photograph as a charming way to affirm that our family had come full circle. It would take only a small intervention in reality to give birth to a new family legend.

The temptation was certainly there. My finger rested on the camera's button; my daughter slept sweetly on. But I did not take the picture. The modern historian's code, the one that discourages the outright fictionalization of the past, bound me too strongly. In a way, I wish I had been able to do it because that picture of my daughter would have made an interesting page in my scrapbook. It would have told a memorable story—just as Helen's cookie jar story is memorable, just as Froissart's tale of his performance at the court of Gaston de Foix is one of the most memorable in the *Chroniques*. But I could not, in the end, fake an event that did not happen. Despite my admiration for the historians of the Middle Ages, I am going to have to stick with a documentary approach to history, even my personal history.

My decision does not mean that I have an infallible hold on the past. Like everyone else, I direct events with my camera so that I will get a better picture; I exaggerate and embellish when I brag about my daughter. When I do so, I am aware that embellishment lies dangerously close to invention. The two exist on a sliding scale, and both betray our desire to remake the past in our own image. My identity as an historian dictates that I stay on the more "factual" end of the scale. But revisiting the medieval historians I studied all those years ago helped me to understand why Helen preferred the other, more creative, end. I cannot do that kind of history, but I am glad to see the medieval mindset alive and well in some circles today.

The next time I attend a crop, I will not be surprised if someone produces a scrapbook page like Helen's. I will plod along making my own documentary history. And I will enjoy everyone else's stories. I may not be able to reconcile the medieval and modern approaches to the past, but the two surely can coexist in my presence.

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HISTORIES

While she stitched, I read stories to her daughter,
especially *Roxaboxen* where the children built a city
in sand traced in lines of white stone,
where sticks were horses, and the only grave was for a lizard.

Snow was melting, and she sewed seed pearls
by hand along the edge of the dress like snow drops
that hadn't opened, that wouldn't open;
then I was walking down an aisle lined with faces.

In that place where the story turns to pathless wood,
I had a baby whose umbilical cord was gathered
around the stem of her neck, and the girl I read stories to
was in the hospital with sick blood.

One of them died and one survived. I made a song
of her name when she was born, just as the girl's mother
must have done. Though my arms were empty,
I didn't sleep, I sang it all the night long.

Her name is a flower, *Dahlia*, that blooms at the height
of summer in blunt colors. The flower has comb-shaped petals
that look like the waxy rooms where bees make honey
from their bodies. I saw one today, odorless it took me in.

Christine Perrin

Our Cylons, Ourselves

Christina Bieber Lake

The third time did it for me. That is, when the third person I met at an academic conference told me that *Battlestar Galactica* was the best show on television, I decided to give it a try. By the end of the first episode, I was hooked. Hours of Netflix and hulu.com later, I had to wait with everyone else for the show's fourth and final season. I also had no idea how it would end, and, like every fan, wanted a satisfying ending.

But writing in the *Atlantic Monthly* well before the finale, James Parker warned that fans weren't going to get that satisfaction. "*Battlestar Galactica*," he wrote, is "presenting all the symptoms of an extended-run high-concept TV series in its decadent phase. An oracular mood, an obsession with identity, a sensation of multiplying meanings—it's the paranoid style in American TV writing." While there is much truth in this assessment of the show's "vertigo," it was also a bit too cynical. In spite of its many rabbit trails and unanswered questions, *Battlestar Galactica* presented a remarkably consistent vision of the challenges we face in the biotechnological revolution. And its concluding episode—"Daybreak: Part 2" which aired on 20 March 2009—was rife with moral and spiritual warnings that had been made all along and intended directly for its technorati audience.

Created by Ron Moore and David Eick, *Battlestar Galactica* began to air on the Sci Fi Channel in 2004, bearing only a skeletal resemblance to its campy 1978 forerunner. The show deserved its considerable following, as it was more aesthetically advanced, better paced, better acted, and better written than most television sci-fi. It also had a stirring original soundtrack. It is an attempt to do well what science fiction at its best offers: a realistic set of characters in somewhat realistic scenarios coupled with completely unrealistic but exciting technology.

The series opens as the world as human beings know it—not on Earth but on what is called the "Twelve Colonies of Kobol"—is about to be devastated by a nuclear attack from the Cylons. Somewhat similar to the Terminators, the Cylons are a race of machines created by man who eventually became self-aware and rebelled. After a long war with the human race, they called a truce and settled far away from their human forefathers. During their absence they evolved beyond their robotic forms into humanoid-like beings, indistinguishable from humans to the naked eye and, apparently, to doctors. These humanoid Cylons—often called "skin jobs" by the humans—eventually infiltrate human society and learn enough to be able to destroy all twelve colonies at once. This apocalypse happens in the pilot. The remaining shows follow the only surviving humans, about 60,000 in number. The fleet is led by Commander Adama (Edward Lee Olmos) whose primary mission is to keep humanity alive. He and the current president of the colonies, Laura Roslin (brilliantly acted by Mary McDonnell), begin to search for a mythical thirteenth colony they have all only heard of: Earth.

Although the show's drama is at first propelled by the anxiety of this zero-sum battle

between man and machine, it is eventually taken over by a deeper identity crisis. The Cylon skin jobs come in twelve models (ranging in attractiveness from Tricia Helfer to Dean Stockwell), any one of which can be replicated any number of times. It soon becomes clear that anyone on board Galactica could be a Cylon, even without knowing it. So the fleet journeys on, trying to fight or flee from an enemy who has infiltrated so completely as to be unidentifiable. It is as unrealistic as it gets, I have to admit, but it was *really* fun. Leaving the basic questions of "Who's a Cylon?" and "Where and what *is* Earth?" tantalizingly unanswered, Ron Moore and company took on a variety of contemporary political issues, including torture, religious fundamentalism, and the temptation to rule tyrannically during times of intense fear. Many of these shows were the best fictional treatments of these issues I ever have seen on television.

In his *Atlantic Monthly* piece, Parker used the show's desire to be politically *au courant* to dismiss its larger questions. They are just "pure nectar to the sci-fi buff, who loves to whir his wings in these realms of ontological vexation: Who is real, after all? And what does it mean to *exist*? And is it nice to have sex with a machine?" Readings like this casually brush off the one venue that might actually make people think about the role that technology plays in our lives, the relationship between science and religion, and the question of what it means to be human. These are hardly new questions, but they do have a new salience today. As Moore, a former *Star Trek* writer and a lapsed Catholic, said in an interview, "It's been an old saw in science fiction for a long time, since *Frankenstein*, that we're going to create life that's going to turn on us. Well, we're right there, and we should probably really think about these things and understand the door we're about to go through" (sepinwall.blogspot.com, 20 March 2009).

When Moore says "we're right there," he is not speaking as some kook who spends his time worrying about how near we might be to Skynet's Judgment Day or to Kurzweil's "Singularity." And Mary Shelley was not some kook who spent her time worrying about animating corpses, either. Both writers understand that human nature has always been the real issue. Technology means greater power, and greater power always comes with good and bad uses. It would be foolhardy to deny that our technology is advancing more quickly than we can process it as we move forward into the twenty-first century. That is the "door" we are about to go through, and the one that Moore wants us to understand. That is why all the fans were dying to know what we would get to on the other side of this door. How would it all end?

Here are what I considered to be the three most likely endings, each with substantial ramifications for the overall point of the show. First, the show could have ended with the destruction of the human race. The darkness of Season Four was more than a little foreboding, and it looked very much like humanity might end not with a bang but a wimper. Galactica thought they had found Earth, but what they found was yet another completely nuked and uninhabitable planet.

Without purpose, the fleet began to drift; with no home, they eventually would die out, even if they did manage to evade the Cylons. This ending would have been very hard to swallow, but understandable. It would have been an affirmation of what Bill Joy pointed out in a famous article in *Wired* magazine, "the 21st-century technologies—genetics, nanotechnology, and robotics (GNR)—are so powerful that they can spawn whole new classes of accidents and abuses." But none of us who had been watching the series really thought that it would end this way. We would have felt betrayed by the writers, and confused by all the glimmers of hope we had seen from the beginning.

Science fiction dystopias perform a much-needed service given how quickly techno-utopians seem to forget the fundamentally flawed nature of human leadership and decision-making.

Second, the show could have ended with a strong affirmation of posthumanism. This is what I thought would happen. I thought the show's big reveal might be a quasi-religious transhumanism along the lines of "we have to completely embrace technology in order to stay alive and reach nirvana, so let's get over it: Cylons R Us. The Cylons are more mystical, evolved, and whole than us, and the good ones can lead us to a new promised, postmodern land." This land would be Donna Haraway's cyborg dreamworld.

Third, the show could have ended by affirming the importance of spirituality in finding a way to draw back from the edge of self-destruction, an edge to which humanity is cyclically drawn. And this is the way it did end, more or less, but with a lot more action. This is sci-fi, after all. After a wicked battle with the Cylons, Adama asks Starbuck (Katee Sackhoff) to jump the ship to another place in space, and she chooses the coordinates based on some music she remembered from her childhood. They jump, and then they see it: the real Earth. They don't call it Earth, but we viewers recognize the continent of Africa. They land, and soon discover that ritualistic, pre-lingual, tribal peoples with compatible DNA inhabit this planet. They then make the remarkable (if completely implausible!) decision to abandon all of their technology and settle on this planet—to "start over." And so the big "reveal" is that these human survivors and their Cylon friends mixed with primitive humans, making them our most distant ancestors.

To be fair to James Parker of the *Atlantic Monthly*, this is what he guessed would happen. He concludes his complaint by joking that the face of the twelfth and last Cylon to be revealed would be L. Ron Hubbard. (And I have to admit, after the series ended, I got an unwanted image in my mind of Tom Cruise jumping for joy on Oprah's sofa). But again, it is too easy to dismiss the issues that the show is trying to engage by taking this ending so literally. It has been a mythological show from the beginning; indeed, what is most at stake for Moore is his conviction that scientific materialism cannot help us answer metaphysical questions. The show's ending does not resolve everything, but it does say a lot about where we find ourselves in the twenty-first century when it comes to some key issues in our biotechnological future. Seen through the lens of the finale, the show makes four consistent claims that are worthy of additional reflection.

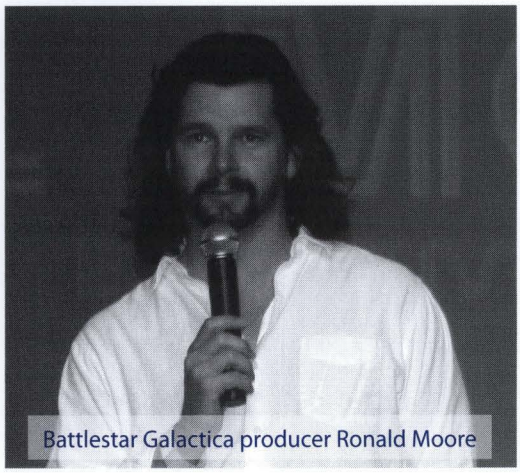
1. *We must recognize that we have always been able to destroy ourselves, and that now we can do it in new and exciting ways.* The show is a classic dystopia, a genre that was largely born in the post World War II era. The great dystopias such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, George Orwell's *1984*, and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* worry about technology, but they worry more about the abuse of power. Ron Moore's strained relationship with the *Star Trek* franchise illustrates quite well his move toward a darker and more realistic vision of technology: he was the one behind the darker *Deep*

Space Nine, and the one who wrote the death of Captain Kirk. Science fiction dystopias perform a much-needed service given how quickly techno-utopians seem to forget the fundamentally flawed nature of human leadership and decision-making. Even Norbert Wiener, the founder of cybernetics, warned that the problem will always be "true sorcery," or simony, the usurpation of power by those with selfish interests.

It is the series's continued illustration of this very fact that lends emotional weight to Lee Adama's (Jamie Bamber) decision to give up technology and integrate with the tribes on Earth. When explaining why he does not want to start by building a city, he says that this time "we break the cycle. We leave it all behind; we start over." And even more tellingly, he muses that "our science charges ahead, our souls lag behind. Let's start anew." To me, these two lines would have been enough to affirm two of the show's most important warnings: the first, that what has happened before will happen again unless we take care, and second, that we need time to catch up morally, ethically, and spiritually with our technology.

But in case we missed it, the writers tacked on a final scene that takes place 150,000 years in the future—in basically our day and age. The camera pans over the beautiful virgin earth and into more forests and then suddenly we see—New York City. The Cylon Caprica Six (Tricia Helfer) and Gaius Baltar (James Callis) are talking about the way humanity is going. (They are talking to each other while looking over the shoulder of Ron Moore himself in a cameo appearance). Caprica says to Gaius, "commercialism, decadence, technology—remind you of anything?" All this has happened before, she says, to which Gaius responds, "The question remains, does all this have to happen again?" And the camera pans to images of advances in robotic technology, including life-like robotic figures.

2. *Don't worry about the definition of a human being, just act like one.* One of the most fascinating things about the series is how it completely abandons the question of human versus Cylon but does not do so by suggesting that we all embrace our posthuman future as soon as possible. Making the Cylons the supposed co-progenitors of the human race seems to me to be less L. Ron Hubbard-esque and more a statement about the relative unimportance of ontology (what is human nature?) as compared to ethics (how should we then behave?). The show insists that the human race was always already technologically enhanced (mating with Cylons!), and that we should worry less about what it means to be human and more about how to act humanely. Ron Moore said in an


Battlestar Galactica producer Ronald Moore

interview that "it was never about saying that people are irredeemable. It was about trying to be honest about people, saying, 'Look at us. We are capable of all these things. Really good people do horrible things and horrible people do good things.'" The idea, of course, is to learn to do more of the good things.

This theme had been developing in *Battlestar Galactica* from the beginning, and the series took a substantial turn in this direction when Colonel Tigh and Galen Tyrol, who had led a human insurgency on a Cylon occupied planet, turn out to be Cylons themselves. In the end, they both choose loyalty to their human friends and lovers over everything else. This theme was also revealed in the toaster-hating Starbuck's reincarnation into an "angel" who leads humanity into a more humane destiny. "Human is as human does" is not an insignificant point to make in a world where technology is changing us rather quickly. My only complaint was

the way the writers handled the transition; it seemed implausible to me that after fighting the Cylons for so long, the humans could find it so easy to work and live side by side with them, especially when the question of who was controlling their programming was still open. But I do agree that part of not "charging ahead with science while our souls lag behind" is learning how to love others in a world of often substantial disagreement and difference.

We look for origins; we look for God. The desire does not prove that what is desired is real, of course, but in *Battlestar Galactica* the Truth is clearly found in visions, prophecies, and dreams as much as (or even more than) in formulas and FTL drives.

3. *We must go green.* We live in an age of increasing environmental responsibility, and the chosen ending tapped strongly into this cultural moment. The fleet's discovery of a virgin Earth revealed the power of the show's aesthetic choices. Season Four in particular was getting literally darker and darker; there were no planets in sight, no blue sky, and even the air seemed heavier. After they find the devastated and uninhabitable planet they had thought was Earth, the crew begins to disintegrate right along with the ship. Admiral Adama gets drunk more often than Colonel Tigh, which is saying something. The crew's morale seemed linked both to the need for hope and the need for an inhabitable, earthly home. This aesthetic flies in the face of *Star Trek's* spaceship interiors in which everyone is cheery and no one seems to be bothered by the fact that there's no sunlight or fresh air. Since I was watching Season Four in the middle of a cold Chicago winter, the aesthetic was particularly noticeable for me. When the fleet finally found the real Earth, I wanted to run outside and hug the ground in my garden in sheer relief. The stark contrast between the darkness of the majority of episodes and the scenes on this colorful planet created what was perhaps the series's most poignant moment. After they decide that they will make it their home, Admiral Adama takes the dying Laura Roslin for a final aerial tour of the planet. They see mountains, oceans, trees, and a flock of pink flamingos—the most color we've seen for five years. Her dying words are: "So much life." These words mean a lot coming from someone who has spent her last energies trying to ensure humanity's survival.

4. *Not everything—and especially not the important things—can be explained by math and science.* One storyline illustrates this theme particularly well. Earlier in Season Four, the Cylon skin job Boomer (Grace Park) had kidnapped Hera, the first human-cylon hybrid child, and taken her to the Cylon fleet. In the final episode, Boomer is bothered by the way the other skin jobs are probing and studying the child, as if she were a lab rat. As Galactica's crew attacks in an effort to recover Hera, Boomer says to the Cylon who is doing the probing, "You are just going to keep doing tests, even with the colony coming down around your ears?" The Cylon impassively responds that they have superior firepower and superior numbers, and "in the end it is all about mathematics."

The core of the show's religious vision is that *life is not all about mathematics.* The show's very existence, the fact of it being a loose collection of interwoven human stories centered around a quest, speaks to this issue most profoundly. We want resolution, and we look for deeper meaning beyond scientific materialism. We look for origins; we look for God. The desire does not prove that what is desired is real, of course, but in *Battlestar Galactica* the Truth is clearly found in visions, prophecies, and dreams as much as (or even more than) in formulas and FTL drives. Starbuck finds Earth through music; ancient prophecies end up coming true. The show's most prominent scientist, Gaius Baltar, becomes the most religious person on it.

These narratives also insist that morality is not reducible to a mathematical equation. The fact of Boomer's "conversion" is a great example. Boomer was the first real human-who-is-actually-a-Cylon surprise on the show, and she went through a lot of abuse from the crew as a result of it. This suffering played no small role in her eventually joining the Cylons and then kidnapping Hera. But the final episode reveals more of her back-story. Boomer suspected she was a Cylon long before the other humans found out, and it is really stressful thinking you might be a Cylon! The stress gets in the way of her duties as a member of Galactica's crew. After one particularly poor job of landing her raptor, Adama tells Boomer that he is going to give her a second chance, and she responds that someday, when it really matters, she will pay him back. Three years later, it is her feelings for Hera as a child and the memory of this promise that lead her to return Hera to Galactica, knowing full well that doing so will lead to her own death. Human decisions might be able to be mapped onto a 0/1 binary, but they cannot be reduced to or explained by that binary. Decisions are the result of complex interactions of emotions, memory, and loyalty. Human is as human does, and Boomer proves her humanity by her actions. Colonel Tigh's and Galen Tyrol's stories are similar.

Beyond these general considerations, the show's specific theology is remarkably reflective of the loose spirituality of our age. One of the show's main questions, the question of why the Cylons are monotheists and the humans are polytheists—and who is "right"—is never resolved. Though the show suggests that monotheism is higher up on the evolutionary scale, it does not or cannot decide where it stands on the issue of what God is. But like the *Star Wars* that Ron Moore grew up on, it does believe in some spiritual "force." This is where the series was most disappointing for Christian viewers. Yoda was a moral heavyweight compared to Gaius Baltar, who my husband and I wanted badly to see thrown out of the airlock from the very beginning. While I do believe that true spiritual leaders are necessarily flawed human beings (I love whiskey priests), it is difficult to buy Gaius's conversion—and his influence—in part because he had so recently been all over the map. In the final showdown, Gaius preaches to Cavil (Dean Stockwell), the leader of the Cylons, "I may be mad, but that doesn't mean I'm not right." I'm with him so far; I've always agreed with Emily Dickinson that "Much Madness is divinest Sense." But Gaius continues that it doesn't matter what we call the force, "God" or "gods," it is a "force of nature, beyond good and evil. Good and evil—we created those." Gaius is not smart enough to make a sophisticated Nietzschean argument about good and evil, and this dumbed-down version does not satisfy. Good and evil have not, in fact, been a human construct at any point in the show, but have been assumed standards, even transcendent ones. An example is when Gaius scolds Cavil, saying that Hera "is not a thing, she's a child." Treating children with dignity, whether human or Cylon, is a non-negotiable moral good.

When it comes to important decisions involving human life, a loose spirituality is better than no spirituality at all. In spite of all its flaws, Gaius's speech works. It comes in a charged moment, with guns drawn and life or death decisions to be made. Gaius pleads with Cavil that if we want to stop the cycle of "death, destruction, escape, death" that characterizes the human/Cylon war, "well, that's in our hands, and our hands only. It requires a leap of faith. It requires that we live in hope, not fear." The God in *Battlestar Galactica* provides moral guidance, but he does not turn people into puppets. The humans who start again on Earth will have fewer weapons and gadgets, but the same choices. And so it is with us, the writers seem to be insisting. We choose what to do with our technology. We choose whether to live in hope or fear. We choose how to treat others. Does all of this have to happen again? Not necessarily, and the choice has always been ours.

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Click

David Lott

When the iconic photographs of 2009 are displayed, I suspect group scenes will prove as memorable as individual faces—snapshots that tell us something not only about who we were this past year, but also something about who we are. *Click*. Barack Obama is inaugurated US president before a panorama of 1.8 million people jamming the Washington National Mall. *Click*. Thousands of Iranians gather at great personal risk in Tehran to protest their country's contested presidential election. *Click*. A sea of signs at the so-called Tea Party March in Washington, DC bearing messages that conflate communism, socialism, Nazism, and fascism into one big totalitarian stew. *Click*. A throng of gay, lesbian, and straight demonstrators march to the US Capitol to advocate for marriage equality and the right for homosexuals to serve openly in the nation's military. *Click*. Crowds line the streets of Hyannisport, Boston, and Washington, DC to pay their respects to the late Senator Edward M. Kennedy.

Whether in celebration or in protest, in advocacy or in mourning, the fact of our gathering, the how and the why of such assembly speaks to our character as countries, to our collective nature, to our aspirations and our fears. It is part of what defines us as citizens, whether of a nation such as the United States where free assembly is a fundamental part of our DNA, of an oppressive regime like Iran where such gathering is a subversive act, of a congregation gathering to worship and to affirm their larger cosmic citizenship—or even as part of that most basic unit of identity, a family. As such, paying close attention to the ways in which we gather is crucial to understanding who we are, as a clan joined by blood and marriage, as a nation, and as citizens of the world. These images give us a material way to begin to grasp our character as humans, both individually and collectively.

I was able to be present at, or at least in close proximity to, all of these above-mentioned gatherings except the Iranian protests, where, like so many other people of the world, I closely followed the Twitter and Facebook feeds that sent us pictures of and information about these brave protesters. Each carried for me a different significance, but my most visceral

emotional resonance came when I was watching Ted Kennedy's funeral cortege pass by. You see, Kennedy's illness and death reflected not just the passing of a icon of public service and citizenship and of an era in American political life; it was also a stark reminder of my own cousin, Ann, whose near-identical diagnosis of brain cancer followed Kennedy's by only weeks, and whose death came in almost the same exact span of days. No crowds lined the streets for Ann, though nearly four hundred people gathered at the memorial service in her small Iowa town to celebrate her life.

As important as those public memorials are, for most of us it is likely the private gatherings of family surrounding the death of a loved one that hold the most meaning—those times when we gaze upon our own iconic images captured in photographs. These pictures do not make the front page of the newspaper or the evening news, but they tell our stories just as powerfully. And so, when my family joined together this fall to mourn our shared loss, we did so with a large-screen television in the back-

ground, displaying a series of pictures of Ann in the final, deeply happy years of her life—images that caught memories and feelings that language could not.

Indeed, as Ann's cancer coursed through her brain, and she sank more deeply into speechlessness, I found myself also increasingly at a loss for words. Earlier in her illness, my family often looked to me to find just the right thing to say. But over time, as Ann's ability to communicate failed, I also found my own voice faltering, failing to speak what was in my mind and heart. In the end, I could only hope that somehow everything that was left unspoken was making its way to her and her family through thoughts, prayers, and spirit.

A similar loss for words came as I pondered what sorts of stories I might share with Ann's daughters about their mom, about our childhood encounters with one another, my memories of her as a young girl, the cousin who most often came to visit. My anxiety rose when I realized that no particular story came to mind. Was our childhood play nondescript or unmemorable? No. But the guilt of failing to remember was nearly crippling.

Yet, as I thought about it more, I realized that for my younger self—as perhaps for most children—Ann had been simply part of the water in which I swam, the air that I breathed. Even as no certain memory stood out, neither could I imagine my childhood without Ann. Her absence in my middle adulthood is equally unthinkable. She was an undeniable fact of life for over fifty years, something that death could never erase. I would not have the life I have without her, even when memories are inchoate. Our relationship was more intimate than many of those for whom I have dozens of life stories to relate. Many people can become episodes in our stories but are not a part of the atmosphere within which we live and have our being. They are not family.

In many ways, that is precisely why family is so important to us, and that is why we gather. It is our lifeline, our ocean, our atmosphere. Family is the space within which we can often make our way through, not always, or even often, aware of where we are. That is not to say that we take these all-important others for granted—though, sadly, we sometimes do just that—but that, like breathing, they are what we inhale and exhale, almost instinctively. In times of death, we may enter more intentionally into that atmosphere and find ourselves inhaling it deeply. As in meditation, we allow ourselves to become aware of our breathing.

Yet, death reminds us also, as we breathe in, that something has changed in that atmosphere, that the air is somehow thinner, and we must labor more to catch our breath, until we attune ourselves to the changes. For a time we may become lightheaded, as if we have altitude sickness. The water in which we are swimming becomes almost indecipherably murkier, lacking some essential quality that we may not be able to name exactly but we recognize as missing.

That is the grief I am experiencing as I mourn Ann's death. Something elemental is gone, that I have known nearly from my earliest memories. And so I went to Iowa, to join with others in my family, to inhale deeply of that beloved atmosphere, to begin the process of adjusting my system to the changes. And, I went to share my own breath with those who were gasping for air, some almost unknowingly.

Asking the "why" questions is one of the ways we gasp for breath in the face of death. To be honest, I've never been big on those sorts

of queries, thinking that they often are more distractions from the truth of life than helps to move forward in life. If you were to ask me the "why" question for Ann's illness and death, I could only say, "Because flesh is frail." That seems so simple, so obvious. Yet the response has a certain profundity. The frailness of flesh is something we all share. It is what permits us to be that air, that water for one another, to be an atmosphere, an ocean, not simply a small, isolated fishbowl or a vacuum chamber. Indeed, such frailty is a gift of God, that which enables us to be strong together, strong in God's love.

And strong enough to cry, to mourn a palpable loss that takes both the certain and indistinct forms of a beloved cousin and a somewhat amorphous memory. Strong enough to add water to the ocean that has been depleted, humidity to the air that has been thinned, so that those who are still here and are yet to come have water in which to swim and air to breathe, just as I—and each of us—were gifted from birth. If that is why we are here and are given to each other, it is enough—even when death would try to convince us otherwise. Grief, at its best, knows better, and so we listen and embrace its message, its gift, that death does not have the power to separate us or deprive us of the love we know as family.

The ways in which we gather as a family mourning a loved one are perhaps not all that different from the ways we gather as a public in celebration, in protest, in advocacy, or in tribute. In the face of death, we celebrate the life now gone. We rail against the powers that have taken that life, whether we believe that power to be God, or cancer, or some faceless evil. We work to assure that the loss is not in vain and find ways to preserve the memory of our loved one—in good works, in storytelling, in photographs. Likewise, in our public assemblies, we join together to strengthen one another and be strengthened, to regain our breath when we think it may be failing, to create an ocean in which we can all swim, as individuals and as a society. The images from these gatherings may be as exhilarating as of a throng of humanity, as stark as the face of someone no longer here, as obvious yet invisible as the air, as calming or as enervating as the water. But they all remind us of who we are, what we fear—be it death or taxes—and to what we aspire and hope to be.

Click. Twelve cousins gather on their grandmother's steps, the only photo of their generation altogether at once. *Click*. A happy

couple, each on their second marriage, pose with their newly blended families. *Click*. A proud mother bends her forehead to her veil-clad daughter before she enters the sanctuary for her wedding. *Click*. A group of elated middle-aged women celebrate their community-theater performance of *The Vagina Monologues*. *Click*. An extended family gathers to celebrate its matriarch's ninetieth birthday, led by a grinning, chemo-balded woman. *Click*. Two bravely smiling daughters wrap their arms around their now wheelchair-bound mother, holding her first grandchild. *Click*.

Photo credits: Inauguration, Senior Airman Kathrine McDowell, USAF. Iranian Election Protests, Hamid Saber (www.flickr.com/photos/hamed). Funeral Procession of Senator Ted Kennedy, Michael Simon (www.flickr.com/photos/mejs85/).

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The Christ of Culture and the ELCA

Robert Benne

In the classic *Christ and Culture*, H. Richard Niebuhr famously argued that religious traditions tend to move from the "Christ against Culture" stance through several mediating positions toward the "Christ of Culture" position, the one in which the religious tradition blends into the culture of the day. He argued in an earlier book—*The Kingdom of God in America*—that this was precisely what happened to American Protestantism as it moved from Puritanism through evangelicalism to liberal Protestantism. The last state is characterized by a full accommodation to culture in which, as he devastatingly put it: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross."

It seems that the two great branches of Lutheranism in America have engaged in that sort of movement. One—the Missouri Synod—has at least partially accommodated to conservative American fundamentalism and evangelicalism, and the other—the ELCA—has almost completely accommodated to liberal Protestantism of the sort that Niebuhr so sharply judged. Both branches were once protected from the allure of American culture by their thriving ethnic enclaves, but that day is over. We're all Americans now.

Missouri's story is more complex than the ELCA's because it continues to remain something of an enclave that preserves a good deal of its classical Lutheranism. Yet in an earlier day it adapted to American fundamentalism as a strategy to maintain biblical authority. Now it flirts with American evangelicalism as a strategy to grow its churches. Quite a story, a fuller version of which need not be told now.

The fresher story is that of the ELCA and its accommodation to liberal Protestantism. The ELCA Church-wide Assembly in August took the fatal step into liberal Protestantism by leaving the Great Tradition of Christian teaching on sexual ethics and joining the declining United Church of Christ and Episcopal Church USA on these matters. It was the first confessional church of any size to succumb to liberal Protestantism's allure. A harsh critic might say that it rendered itself a sect and became schismatic at the same time.

There is a general route to the Christ of Culture position taken by liberal Protestantism and a more specific one taken by the ELCA. Let's unpack each. Liberal Protestantism had its origin in the effort of European Protestantism to come to terms with the challenges of the Enlightenment in general and the natural sciences in particular. No longer willing to press Christianity's dogmatic assertions—especially those that entailed supernatural claims—the pioneers of liberal Protestantism either retreated into religious self-consciousness (Schleiermacher) or ethics (von Harnack, Ritschl). Christianity became a religion of either religious feeling or of sublime, universalistic ethics. Liberal Christianity took the latter turn. On American soil it was translated into the Social Gospel movement which gradually found its way into the whole of mainstream Protestantism. This movement was aided by the social sciences—history, economics, sociology, social psychology—which, in the process of aiding liberal religion, sometimes swallowed that religion whole by exerting its own redemptive claims. John Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory* (1991) traces how the social sciences were intended to replace theology as explanations of the world. In utilizing them, liberal Christianity often watered itself down by giving up crucial ground.

The movements of liberation of the 1960s gave enormous new energy to the Social Gospel tradition. Those original movements were essentially secular in character, but many in the Mainline Protestant denominations took notice of their negative critique of inherited religion, even in its liberal Protestant form. The liberation movements—feminism, multi-culturalism, gay and black liberation, anti-imperialism, and the environmental movement—exercised a withering critique of those religious traditions most likely to be responsive to them—the white, middle-class mainstream Protestant denominations. Convinced of their guilt, these denominations devoted themselves to the internal struggle against the oppressive ideologies and practices that the critique had unveiled. They sought cleansing within while they committed themselves to the external struggle for social, political, and cultural liberation.

Compared to this heady brew, such things as preaching the Gospel, forming persons into the Christian life, Christian education, and evangelism seemed fairly tepid. The central core of belief and practice became fuzzy and uninteresting while social and political transformation became "where it was really at." The problem was that these liberating movements not only were debatable fruits of the Gospel, but they were not the Gospel itself. If you wanted intense attention to the core, the headquarters of liberal Protestantism didn't offer much. And if you really wanted to immerse yourself fully and effectively in these liberating movements, it was better to join their secular manifestations, which were unencumbered by the religious inertia of the grassroots. These skewed commitments led to dramatic membership losses among the liberal Protestant denominations.

The ELCA has been tugged by this general Protestant movement, but it has had its own history of accommodation to elite liberal culture. The mid-1980s planning stage of the ELCA was dramatically affected by a group of 1960s radicals who pressed liberationist (feminist, black, multiculturalist, gay) legislative initiatives right into the center of the ELCA structures. Among them was a quota system that skews every committee, council, task force, synod assembly, and national assembly toward the "progressive" side. There are quotas for representing specific groups in all the organized activity of the church. 60 percent must be lay, 50 percent must be women, and 10 percent must be people of color or whose first language is other than English. The 10 percent quota was trimmed down from its originally proposed 30 percent. The losers, of course, are white male pastors. Our Virginia delegation to the 2009 Church-wide Assembly, for example, had only one male pastor among its eight elected members. Further, the prescribed structure distanced the sixty-five bishops from the decision making of the church. The bishops have only influence, not power. Aware of the divisiveness of the Sexuality Task Force's policy recommendations to the 2009 Assembly, the bishops voted 44–14 to require a two-thirds majority for their enactment, but the bishops were ignored by both the Church Council and the Assembly. Further, theologians were given no formal, ongoing, corporate role in setting the direction of the ELCA. They, too, were kept at a distance and actually viewed as one more competing interest group.

In this decisive moment, the liberals in the ELCA intended to smash the authority of the influential theologians and bishops who had informally kept both the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America on course. They wanted many voices and perspectives, especially those of the "marginalized," put forward in the ongoing deliberations of the ELCA. They were so successful that now after twenty years there is little authoritative biblical or theological guidance in the church. There are only many voices, and no doctrinal discipline is ever exercised on any voice.

At a time when it is becoming exceedingly difficult to transmit a religious tradition to a new generation deeply influenced by a highly individualistic and relativistic culture, the liberals injected into the DNA of the ELCA a hermeneutic of suspicion regarding the inherited tradition. Thus, it is unclear and fuzzy about core Lutheran/Christian doctrine, but it is dogmatic about lib-

erationist causes. No one can really challenge the ELCA commitment to quotas, its persistent pro-choice stance on abortion, its relentless purging of masculine images and pronouns for God, its fixation on Israel as the real problem in the Middle East, its heavy commitment to liberal policies in its advocacy efforts, its increasing temptation to substitute religious dialogue for missionary activity, and its full commitment to liberal strategies against global warming.

It would be inaccurate, though, to argue that significant elements of the orthodox Lutheran tradition are absent from the ELCA. It is important to distinguish between the headquarters or "commanding heights" of these churches and their grassroots congregations. The former lean heavily toward "progressive Christianity" while many of the latter proclaim the classic Gospel. But the headquarters will indeed affect the congregations in due time. Additionally, the ELCA's Constitution, except for its neutered language, is a strong document that could provide the rallying point for a new confessionalism in the church. There are many faithful congregations led by faithful pastors who are deeply committed to the Lutheran construal of the faith. Further, the classic language can be spoken by leaders in the "commanding heights" of the church. But none of these lingering elements seem to make much difference in fending off the allure of the Christ of Culture. The "commanding heights," unfortunately, will keep commanding in the same direction.

Robert Benne is director of the Roanoke College Center for Religion and Society.

*

Before water was water it grieved
word by word the way each woman
caresses her first child

though what you hear is its mist
washing over those breasts
as moonlight and riverbanks

no longer struggling —by instinct
your lips will claim the Earth
with the kiss that gives each birth

its scent and between your arms
clings with just its bones
—with each kiss you drink

then weep and the dirt already rain
helps you remember nothing else
between your thirst and breathing.

Simon Perchik

YOU'LL KNOW THE TRUTH

You'll know the truth
After you curse and scream
At it, and then agree.
You'll know the truth
When you are shaken
From a dream
Far closer to the mark
Than factuality.
You'll know the truth
When you find it where it hides,
And smell it in the dark,
And track it through the street,
And love it like a wife.
The truth will set you free
When, having rescued you,
It takes your life.

Charles R. Strietelmeier

Why God Loves the Blues, Part 1

Christian Scharen

Some people think that the blues is something that is evil—I don't. If the blues is delivered in the truth, which most of them are, if I sing the blues and tell the truth, what have I done? What have I committed? I haven't lied.

Bluesman Henry Townsend[1]

Late one evening in 1939, the patrons at the Manhattan nightclub knew something unusual was about to happen. Café Society, an unusually progressive club that welcomed white and black, performers and audiences, had a full house that night. The featured artist, Billie Holiday, had already at age twenty-four gained a reputation as a unique and moving interpreter of many popular songs such as "What a Little Moonlight Can Do." But this night, before the final song of her set, the servers stopped serving, cigarettes were snuffed out, and the house lights were turned down save a single spotlight. The light illumined just her face, as if she were standing under a dim streetlight. The song began with Frankie Newton's haunting muted trumpet crying out in repeated descending lines, giving way to Sonny White's hushed, mournful piano. Half sitting on a stool, half standing, leaning into the microphone, Holiday slowly began her lament:

Southern trees bear a strange fruit
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root
Black bodies swinging in the Southern breeze
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

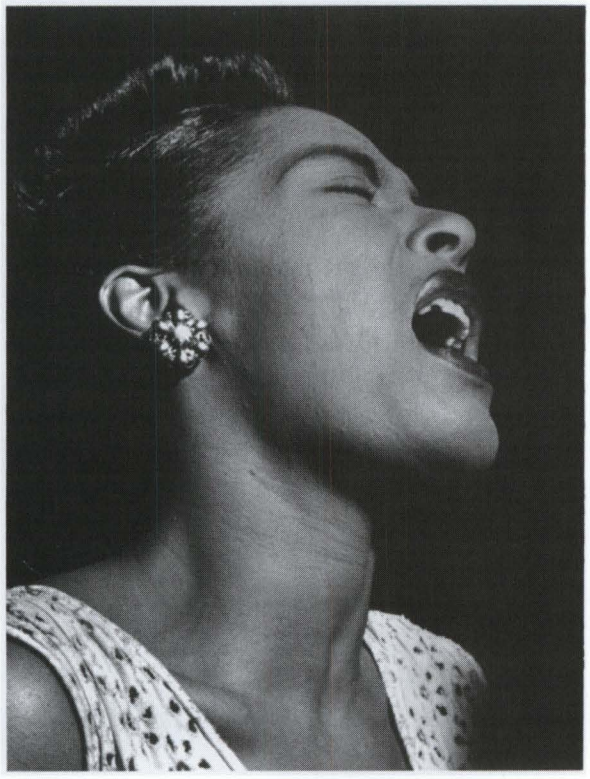
Not a glass clinked; not a muffled cough could be heard in the club. Slowly, with an artfully restrained tempo and emotion, she continued:

Pastoral scene of the gallant South
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth
Scent of magnolia sweet and fresh
And the sudden smell of burning flesh.
Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck,
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck,
For the sun to rot, for a tree to drop,
Here is a strange and bitter crop.

She brought the song to a beautiful, horrifying end holding a high note on "crop" as if imagining the hanging bodies in her mind's eye. Then the light cut out, and she walked off the stage. After a period of stunned silence, one lone person nervously began to clap, and the whole audience joined. Many in the audience openly wept, and word quickly spread (Holiday 84; Clarke 164).

There are many versions of how Billie Holiday came to sing this song, and each tends to make its teller look especially relevant to the story (unsurprisingly, the white men make themselves out to be the wise ones, and Billie oblivious and obedient, something she herself contests in her biography). Despite conflicting interpretations, some facts seem clear. Abel Meeropol, a New York City schoolteacher, wrote the song under his pen name, Louis Allan. An avid poet and songwriter allied with progressive causes of the time, Meeropol supposedly saw a photograph of the infamous August 7, 1930 lynching of Tom Shipp and Abe Smith in Marion, Indiana. After Shipp and Smith were captured and charged with robbery, murder, and rape, an angry mob broke into the Grant

County jail, brutally beat them to death, and hung them over a tree in the town square. Local photographer Lawrence Beitler captured a surreal scene that portrays some of the thousands who gathered for the spectacle: men in ties and banded straw hats, women in dresses, with one man in the center pointing upwards towards the bloodied bodies hanging limply from ropes thrown over branches in the tree (see Madison). Deeply moved by what he saw, Meeropol



penned the poem and developed a melody for the song that he and a few others sang at school meetings and union gatherings.

While much of America was mobbing theaters to see *Gone with the Wind*, Meeropol asked—or was invited, depending on the story—to share the song with Holiday. Barney Josephson, manager of Café Society, negotiated the meeting. Again, accounts vary, but it is clear that despite others wanting credit for her decision to sing the song, it was Holiday herself who felt called to take it on despite real risks of retaliation. She recalled:

> It was during my stint at Café Society that a song was born which became my personal protest—"Strange Fruit." The germ of the song was in a poem written by Lewis Allan. I first met him at Café Society. When he showed me that poem, I dug it right off. It seemed to spell out all the things that had killed Pop. (Holiday 84; Davis 186)

In fact, her father, jazz guitarist Clarence Holiday, died just two years prior to her singing "Strange Fruit." Suffering from exposure to mustard gas while serving in World War I, he became sick on tour in Texas and was refused treatment at the local hospital. By the time he was able to receive care on the Jim Crow ward of the Veterans Hospital, pneumonia had set in, and he died shortly after.

A lifetime of experience with such racially charged incidents gave Billie Holiday ample means to understand and resonate with the emotional edge of the song. Recalling her first (and only) opportunity at the big screen, opposite Louis Armstrong in *New Orleans* (1947), Holiday reveals her anger at discovering she would "star" in the role of a maid:

> I thought I was going to play myself in it. I thought I was going to be Billie Holiday doing a couple of songs in a nightclub setting and that would be that. I should have known better. When I saw the script, I did. You just tell one Negro girl who's made movies who didn't play a maid or a whore. I don't know any. I found out I was going to do a little singing, but I was still playing the part of a maid. (Holiday 119)

She made "Strange Fruit" her signature, even changing her contract to stipulate her right to perform the song as a protection against club owners who regularly sought to keep her from singing it. When her own mother, Sadie Fagan, worried about her safety and asked her, "Why are you sticking your neck out?" Holiday replied, "Because it might make things better" (Greene 61).

Billie Holiday knew that the song might not make her career better, no matter what long-term changes she might have hoped for in society. John Hammond, the talent scout who brokered her first recording contract on the Columbia label, went on record that singing the song was "artistically the worst thing that ever happened to Billie." Drummer Max Roach, however, saw something else, something shared by many: "When she recorded it, it was more than revolutionary. She made a statement that we all felt as black folks." The song's author, Abel Meeropol, said that "Billie Holiday's styling of the song was incomparable and fulfilled the bitterness and shocking quality I had hoped the song would have. The audience gave her a tremendous ovation" (Margolick 29).

New York Post columnist Samuel Grafton, deeply moved by the power of the song, wrote: "The polite conversations between race and race are gone. It is as if we heard what was spoken in the cabins, after the night riders had clattered by." Indeed, the prominence of the song did lend energy to the decades-long battle by NAACP leaders and others to sponsor and pass a national anti-lynching law. Bills were introduced and passed three times in the House of Representatives; however, all three were stopped by filibusters in the Senate. It is a significant piece of the horror of lynching in the US that a national anti-lynching law was never passed as a result of this Senate inaction, and in 2005 the Senate publically apologized for this failure.[2]

Most of Billie Holiday's songs were not directly political. They were songs about love and loss, typical subjects for popular music and for the blues in particular. In fact, "Strange Fruit" was released as a 78 recording with Holiday's own composition as the "B" side. Titled "Fine and Mellow" and written the night before the recording session, the song's theme ruminates on being treated poorly by her man. While only twenty-four when she wrote and recorded this song, Holiday had seen enough of life—her own and others—to sing powerfully from the experience of suffering.

Eleanora Fagan, Holiday's birth name, was born in Philadelphia in 1915 to Sadie Fagan. Her father left before she was born and apparently didn't acknowledge his paternity until she became famous many years later. Raised by her mother in Philadelphia and New York in very difficulty circumstances, Holiday recalls being raped multiple times before she was fifteen. During her teens, she worked as a prostitute, eventually spending a year in prison for solicitation. She had begun singing earlier in night clubs and brothels, but after prison finally got a break singing for tips in Harlem night clubs where Columbia Records talent scout John Hammond heard her. By age eighteen, she had recorded her first records, chosen for her and recorded with popular band leaders like Bennie Goodman.

As Holiday began to write her own songs, such as "Fine and Mellow," she drew powerfully on the blues mode. Jazz great Winton Marsalis remarked:

> When you hear Billie Holiday sing, you hear the spirit of Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong together in a person, so you have the fire of the blues shouter, you have the intelligent choice of notes like a great jazz musician, but with her you have a profound sensitivity to the human condition. She tells you something about the pain of the blues, of life, but inside of that pain is a toughness and that's what you are attracted to.

Perhaps her best live recording of the song was the live telecast of *The Sound of Jazz*, a CBS television program in December 1957.[3] For the recording she reconnected with her old friend, saxophone great Lester Young. Dressed simply in a long black dress and white shirt and cardigan, Holiday took her characteristic stance half sitting, half standing on a stool amidst the instrumentalists. As the saxophones slowly swing into the sad tune marked by classic blues descending thirds, Holiday gently unfolds the first verse in AAB form:

My man don't love me, he treats me oh so mean
My man he don't love me, he treats me awful mean
He's the lowest man, that I've ever seen

Saxophone solos follow, including an incredibly moving and subtle solo by Lester Young, a solo clearly moving to Holiday whose facial expressions seem to reach out to urge him on.

If she was mostly known for light-hearted love songs like "It Was Just One of Those Things," the blues as represented in "Fine and Mellow" were closer to Billie Holiday's life experience. She did experience a series of abusive relationships with men, usually interwoven with her own abuse of drugs and alcohol, a sad fact that contributed to her death at the young age of forty-four. Yet her legacy has only grown since her death, a legacy rooted in her brilliant innovations as a vocalist and her willingness to use her career to raise "race" questions. She remarked on more than one occasion that "I'm a race woman," and lamented that on tours, "I hardly ever ate, slept or went to the bathroom without having a major NAACP-type production," a reality of the still-strong segregation policies in many regions where she traveled and played (Davis 193). Even in more progressive urban areas, white audiences could be impervious to her message, as when a woman at a Los Angeles club asked that Holiday sing "that sexy song you're so famous for, you know, the one about the naked bodies swinging in the trees" (Holiday 84; Davis 193, 195). One understands something of the profound pain of her life in stories such as these. Such pain helps one understand her determination to take her stand concert after concert singing what may be the most moving, if horrible, love song of her career—a love song for her people rooted in the prophet's cry against injustice.

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Notes

1 Quoted in Spencer, 122.

2 Incredibly, after the horror of 4,742 recorded lynchings in American history, and undoubtedly more that were unrecorded, the Senate could not even pull off an on-the-record unanimous vote. In fact, the 2005 vote was a voice vote, so individual votes would not be recorded, and was co-sponsored by 80 of 100 Senators, a surprising tally. "It's a statement in itself that there aren't 100 co-sponsors," said Senator John Kerry (D-Mass). Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Senate Issues Apology over Failure on Lynching Law," *New York Times,* 14 June 2005.

3 A video of this famous performance is available on YouTube at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tNSp7MaADM (accessed on July 29, 2009).

ILLUSA'S STONE*

We rose and drove east and the sun fired the frozen white fields
of our unhappiness, when we arrived, we went inside,
in our mouth were the words of things with edges—
coal, fish, boat, net. The night before, the character said to me
from the book: *do not be afraid of life, if you carry*
even one happy memory you are safe to the end of your days.

The sleepless afternoon you came into the kitchen
must have been in spring because the windows are open
in that first house, we make bread, you kneading
with your small hands, and put it out to rise.
From the nets, I lug this solid memory
against the glimmering ice holes of another season.

Christine Perrin

* In *The Brothers Karamatsov*, Alyosha addresses the boys with these words in memory and honor of Illusha, a boy who died.

The Wounded Healer

Crystal Downing

In his book *The Wounded Healer*, Henri Nouwen writes of the tension we all feel between our human "ability to travel rapidly to another planet" and our "hopeless impotence to end a senseless war on this planet"; between our "high-level discussions about human rights" and the "torture" that continues to scar humans all over the world.

Though written in the 1970s, Nouwen's words speak for all times and all places, as demonstrated in an award-winning Irish film *The Front Line* (2006). As though illustrating Nouwen's tension, writer/director David Gleeson repeatedly inserts high angle shots of modern Dublin, its rapid travel looking cleanly high-tech, in order to contrast with the wounding depravity in the dark streets below. More significantly, Gleeson inserts a copy of *The Wounded Healer* into the story, encouraging alert viewers to read his film through the lens of Nouwen's work.

Not many will, of course. The camera lingers on the book for only several seconds as a detective rifles through the detritus of a kidnapping scene. I noticed the book only because I recognized its cover art: a distinctive painting of Jesus by French Fauvist Georges Rouault (1871–1958). If I didn't happen to own the book, I, like most viewers, would have only paid attention to the slip of paper Detective Inspector Harbison finds inside the book: a scrap with a telephone number written on it. This is unfortunate, because, just as the detective's case depends on that scrap inside *The Wounded Healer*, the case for watching this film depends on what's inside *The Wounded Healer*.

Inside the book, Nouwen seeks to solve a mystery: how to make "one's own wounds a source of healing." His answer does not call for "a sharing of superficial personal pains but for a constant willingness to see one's own pain and suffering as rising from the depth of the human condition which all men share." *The Front Line,* then, addresses the human condition we all share.

Gleeson structures the film around pain and suffering, inserting television images of tribal warfare and refugee migrations in Africa as the opening credits roll by. Even before the credits, he introduces us to a victim of pain and suffering: a Congolese refugee named Joe, who has just been granted political asylum in Ireland. As we see Joe bed down in a homeless shelter, the camera slowly zooms in on his closing eyes, cutting to a dream montage of papers burning on a wall, a blood-splattered chair wrapped in barbed wire, a bloody hand grabbing a machete. When Joe bolts upright from this nightmare, we see his back criss-crossed with thick scars. This, then, is the film's wounded healer.

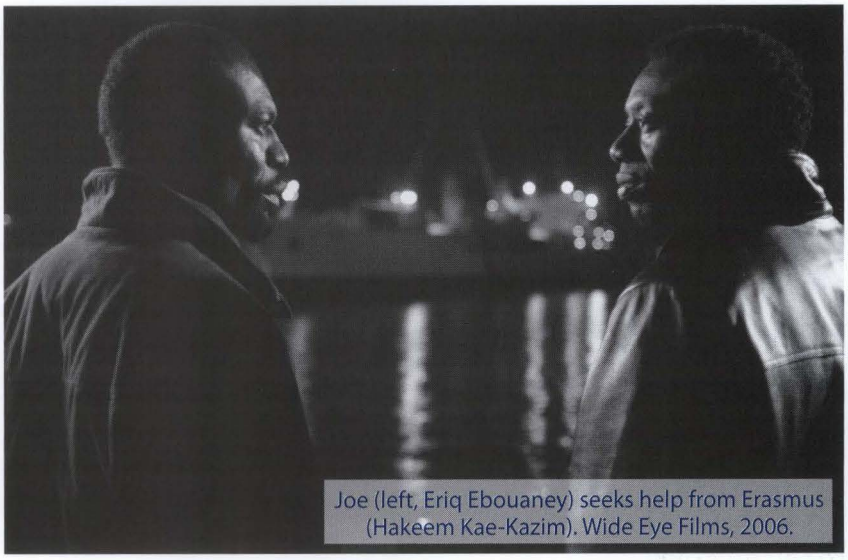
Indeed, though wounded by egregious war crimes, Joe exudes a healing presence, reinforced by the cross he wears around his neck. When his Congolese family finally joins him in Dublin, he welcomes wife Kala and nine-year-old son Daniel with tender strength, sleeping on the couch to give space to the traumatized refugees, entering their bedroom only to calm their nightmare induced screams. Daniel, fearful that the "bad men" from Africa will find him in Ireland, asks "Are there bad men in *this* country?" Joe replies in the affirmative, but then promises the boy, "I'll always be here for you." Indeed, he can support his family because he has been "always there" on his job, complimented by bank employees for the fact that no robberies have occurred since he became their security guard.

Unfortunately, "bad men" have designs on banks, and Joe is wounded again. An Irish gang, led by a thug named Eddie, shoves Joe into a van in order to inform him they have kidnapped his family and will use despicable torture if Joe refuses their request: to get the gang inside the bank vault. We quickly see

that depraved behavior has no single nationality, no single color. The depredations of Irish gangs echo Congolese atrocities.

Gleeson makes the echo explicit when Joe seeks the help of a Congolese expatriate: a Dublin criminal named Erasmus. Though Joe tells him "I cannot respect the rule of the blade," Erasmus kidnaps one of Eddie's thugs, inflicting on him the exact same torture that Eddie threatened on Daniel. The film avoids showing us the horrific act, but its description appalls, whether articulated by a Congolese or an Irish thug.

Gleeson inserts similar echoes throughout the film. While taunting Daniel and Kala after the kidnapping, Eddie notices a brutal scar on the woman's throat, mutters "Animals!" and leaves the room. The film then cuts to a close-up on Eddie's disturbed face, followed by shots of his alcohol and his gun. We sense that Eddie struggles to suppress awareness of his own "animal" behavior. The echo becomes explicit as the film immediately cuts to the burning papers that entered Joe's nightmare: papers that we now see are children's drawings. Both in the Congo and in Ireland, Joe has been forced to ask a question articulated by Nouwen: "Who can save a child from a burning house without taking the risk of being hurt by the flames?"



Joe (left, Eriq Ebouaney) seeks help from Erasmus (Hakeem Kae-Kazim). Wide Eye Films, 2006.

The connection between Africa and Europe is reinforced by the next shot: in a close up, we see newsreel images of Congolese warfare reflected in Detective Harbison's spectacles as he sits before a computer screen. Meanwhile, in voiceover we hear again Joe's promise to Daniel: "I'll always be here for you... I promise!" Only later do we understand the significance of this montage: we discover that Harbison's son was murdered in front of his home in Dublin. Europe echoes Africa, white echoes black, all echoing Nouwen: "wounds and pains become openings or occasions for a new vision"—like the reflection on Harbison's glasses.

The mirroring of black and white depredations is offset by Joe's healing of black and white relations. When a white janitor discovers Joe in the bank at midnight, his racist prejudices resurface, and he locks Joe in a closet. Chopping his way out with a hatchet, Joe threatens the racist, until the janitor yells, "I have a family! I have a family!" This leads Joe to confess that he is in the bank to save his own family. In response, the janitor then makes his own confession: he sleeps in the bank because his wife threw him out of the house; he is alienated from family. Both men have been wounded through family separation: a wounding that heals their antagonism only through mutual confession. In *The Wounded Healer*, Nouwen explains that "Mutual confession... becomes a mutual deepening of hope, and sharing weakness becomes a reminder to one and all of the coming strength." Joe and the janitor work together in mutual hope and strength, stealing the bank money back from the thugs so that Joe might use it to negotiate the release of his family.

The brief relationship between Joe and the janitor adumbrates that between Detective Inspector Harbison and Joe. Like the janitor, Harbison first assumes Joe has criminal intentions, an assumption confirmed when

his research reveals that Joe lied to authorities: Kala is not actually his wife; Daniel is not his son. (And we suddenly realize why Joe sleeps on the couch.) When Harbison's associate suggests that perhaps Joe lied for "a good reason," Harbison sneers, "You'll see what kind of man he is."

We are given a chance to see just that when Kala escapes from the kidnappers and ends up at the police station. Harbison immediately assumes Joe has been abusing her, until she reveals the truth. Kala and Daniel

Joe became a ghost of himself when he gave up on God in order to employ the violence he preached against. As Erasmus puts it, "Regardless of the man, the demon lies in all of us. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting for revenge."

are not related to each other. They were the only survivors of tribal genocide, discovered among bloody corpses by Joe. "A good man," Joe lied about their status to get them asylum in Dublin. But Kala refuses to tell Harbison more. She has promised Joe she will never reveal his identity.

Harbison must discover Joe's identity on his own, and he finds a major clue when he opens *The Wounded Healer* in Joe's apartment. The phone number stuck in its pages connects him to Erasmus, who is brought in for questioning. Through Erasmus we learn of the graphic torture Joe underwent: beaten and tied with barbed wire to a chair, Joe was forced to watch as village children were murdered in front of his face. As Erasmus relates the lurid tale, Gleeson cuts in shots of Joe rescuing Daniel from the kidnappers' hideout. Thus, while we hear of his brutal wounding we watch Joe tenderly inspect Daniel's wounds, touching each scrape as though to heal it. Gleeson thus illustrates Nouwen's words: "the minister can make his own wounds available as a source of healing."

This touching moment (in both senses of "touching") is destabilized, however, when the shot returns to Erasmus. He says of Joe, "We saved him... but he died that day.... The man we lifted from that chair is a ghost." We didn't expect "ghost" as the resolution to Harbison's prediction that we'll "see what kind of man he is." This disturbing assessment of Joe's humanity is foreshadowed by a scene earlier in the film: Erasmus asks one of Eddie's thugs, "What is it that makes a man? The head? The heart? Something else?"—right before he tortures him.

As though implying that violent brutality turns men into ghostlike shadows of themselves, Gleeson laces the film with shadows. When Eddie's gang first enters the bank to rob it, we see their forms as shadows on venetian blinds. After Eddie notices the scar on Kala's neck and mutters "Animals," we see his shadow rocking back and forth over Daniel's quivering body. When Joe enters the same room to rescue Daniel, we initially see only his shadow hovering over Daniel's bed. Then, after Joe tenderly touches Daniel's wounds, we are given shadows once again: Joe places headphones on Daniel's ears, but we see the action only as shadows on the wall. Significantly, this shadowed image immediately follows Erasmus's reference to Joe becoming a "ghost." We are left wondering why the wounded healer is reduced to shadows like the malicious thugs.

Erasmus, whose phone number was found inside *The Wounded Healer*, has the answer. He reveals to Harbison that Joe is a Catholic priest: "Father Joseph; a good man... a man of peace who tried to bring our tribes together.... Father Joseph; he could not believe in a God after what he had seen." The camera immediately cuts to another ghostlike image: the silhouette of Joe's form with a stained-glass window behind him. As we watch the form pick up a machete on the church floor, Erasmus tells us in voiceover that "Father Joseph spared no one." In other words, Joe became a ghost of himself when he

gave up on God in order to employ the violence he preached against. As Erasmus puts it, "Regardless of the man, the demon lies in all of us. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting for revenge."

Immediately after these words we discover why Joe put headphones on Daniel. Still in the kidnappers' hideout, Joe grabs a knife and heads to an adjacent room where the thugs count their money. The headphones, in other words, will block out sounds of mayhem as Joe once again takes revenge. As throughout the film, we don't see the violence; instead we see shadows of chaos on the walls. Significantly, when Joe returns to Daniel's room, we see his shadow rock back and forth over the boy: a direct echo of Eddie's shadow rocking back and forth over Daniel in the exact same spot. The demon of violence turns all men—white and black, European and African—into shadows of humanity. Just as Father Joseph's name has been reduced into "Joe," so the "man" has been reduced into a shadow.

"He's long gone," as one policeman puts it. He refers to Joe's disappearance after returning Daniel to the police station. But viewers realize that the officer unwittingly echoes the message of Erasmus: the wounded healer died from his wounds; he is only a ghost of a man; he is long gone.

What hope is there for Joe? He is like the "ministers, priests, and Christian laymen" discussed by Nouwen, who "have become disillusioned, bitter, and even hostile when years of hard work bear no fruit, when little change is accomplished." Nouwen's answer to such despair is profound:

> So long as we define leadership in terms of preventing or establishing precedents, or in terms of being responsible for some kind of abstract "general good," we have forgotten that no God can save us except a suffering God, and that no man can lead his people except the man who is crushed by its sins.

Crushed by horrific sins, including his own, Joe leaves Daniel at the station in order to return to a church lit up against the dark night. There Joseph seeks healing. He seeks what Nouwen calls "a definitive breach in the deterministic chain of human trial and error." He seeks, in other words, "the historic Christ-event" that provides "dramatic affirmation there is light on the other side of darkness."

What happens in the church is too *touching* for words. Like Harbison before his computer screen, you will need to sit before your own screen, allowing *The Front Line* to glimmer on lenses provided by Nouwen. Aching for the wounded healer, you will behold images lit up against the other side of darkness.

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Summer's Last Stand

Rediscovering William Dean Howells

Harold K. Bush Jr.

In 1871, William Dean Howells, an emerging author on the East Coast whose campaign biography of Abraham Lincoln had landed him an overseas consular job as a standard (and expected) reward for services rendered, made a visit back to his roots in Ohio with his father. There they spent the evening at the home of future president James Garfield, who was at the time most notable as a genuine Civil War hero. While they all lingered on the front porch of Garfield's home, Howells began to unravel tales of his many meetings with some of the great New England literary lights, such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and even the great Emerson himself. Garfield leaped to his feet and invited to the porch his friends and family, so that they might come and listen to the wonderful words falling from the lips of his young, well-traveled friend.

This charming anecdote illuminates not only the connectedness of the young Howells but also the critical genius and storytelling abilities of this vastly underrated writer. Garfield certainly got it. Not long afterwards, the literary establishment of Boston began to get it, especially after Howells became editor of the prestigious *Atlantic Monthly* in 1871 at the ripe old age of thirty-four. His first novel, *The Wedding Journey*, appeared the following year. But it was in his editorial position at the *Atlantic*, and later at the rival *Harper's Magazine*, that Howells did some of his most effective work: identifying and nurturing some of the most important writers of his era.

What often gets ignored these days, however, is how important Howells was himself as arguably the exemplary novelist of the American nineteenth century. If I were to create a list of American writers whose works deserve wider attention these days, Howells would be at or near the top. Not only was Howells one of the culture's most influential editors and mentors throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, he is arguably the most underrated novelist in all of our national literature. Somehow his highly structured, deeply informed, and purely written fictions, such as *A Modern Instance*, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, *Annie Kilburn*, or *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, have almost completely disappeared from college curricula. The lone exception these days is *Silas Lapham*, of course, but even this recognizable masterpiece is often one of the final cuts in an era of many American masterpieces, as teachers pare down the reading list from twelve to ten to eight and now, most commonly, about seven books per semester.

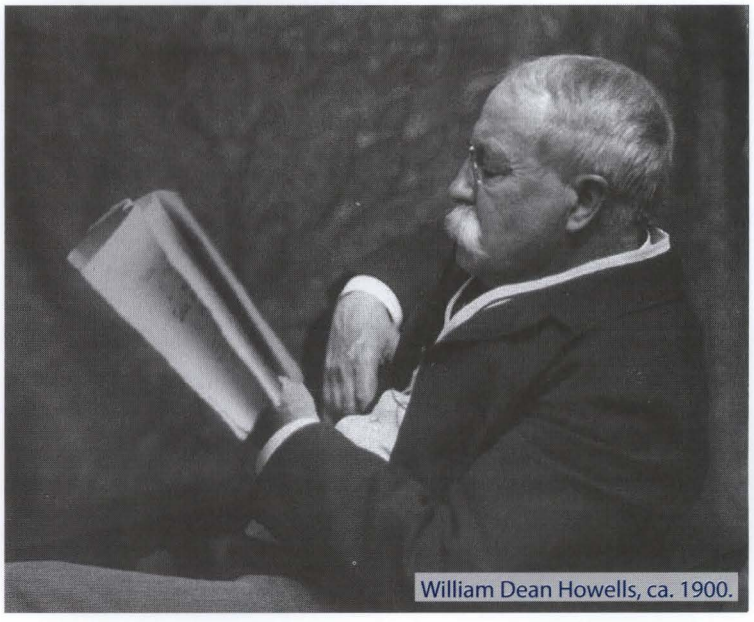
That is a very fine short list of novels, but my favorite is probably the largely forgotten *Indian Summer*. For one thing, it is unusual among his works for being set abroad. Howells's infatuation with Italy (where Mr. Lincoln sent him as US Consul in Venice during the Civil War) is charming even as it makes an important contribution to our understanding of the cultural cachet of living in Europe and taking the "grand tour." And no doubt Howells continued to dream about Italy throughout his adult life, as a sheer highlight of wonder and romance. Such is its symbolic resonance here—and perhaps it helps explain my own predilection for *Indian Summer*. Howells and I, it turns out, share the experience of being smitten by Italy.

The opening scene depicts a veteran Indiana newsman named Colville, sitting on the Ponte Vecchio of Florence, the gorgeous "Old Bridge" spanning the Arno River. Although he is tak-

ing in one of the most famous, breathtaking scenes in all of Europe, this journalist from the Middle West wishes instead that he were back home in Indiana, taking in the sights from a bridge over the river in scenic Des Vaches, Indiana, where he edited the newspaper for two decades.

Calling the location for which he is pining a "cow-town," as the name implies, is precisely the kind of wit that is worked throughout the novel. In French, "vache" as an adjective is rather tricky—it can refer to something either liked or disliked, and it can also imply something rather dense or stupid. As a noun, it can also act as a sort of insult. Overall, "vache" has many strange and often contradictory usages in colloquial French, some of which Howells surely understood. In any event, the choice of the term for the name of his beloved city is an illustration of the genius with which Howells regularly constructed his tales. In this case, it registers the simultaneous reverence and horror for the town of his past. We might say, the name gestures toward the love-hate relationship his hero has for the old lands of his youth.

There is something at once absurd and yet charming about this old Middle Westerner, seated in the center of the splendor of the Italian Renaissance, and yet somehow wishing vainly to be back in the Hoosier State. Absurd, and yet like most things in the stories of William Dean Howells, oddly suited to the old tricks of newspapermen like Colville, the likeable protagonist. Colville has left the newspaper at which he has spent the strength and passions of his youth—a paper for which he has poured out his sweat, turning it into the chief organ of the entire region of the state. But in one presidential election, he had made the mistake of supporting the wrong candidate (a non-Republican, the mark of Cain in Indiana), and as a result he had lost all credibility and decided to sell his share of the profitable paper. Then, like many newly affluent Americans after the war, he decides to go abroad for a time and see the wonders of old Europe. Not surprisingly, Colville had not always wanted to be a journalist. In his younger days, he dreamed of becoming an architect, and his favorite dreamweaver was John Ruskin, the romantic chronicler of the beauties to be found in places such as Rome, Florence, and Venice—the holy trinity of the Grand Tour, all located in the jewel of Europe, Italy. And yet, as the novel opens upon this jewel called Florence, there he sits, wishing to be back in Des Vaches. Old habits die hard, it seems.



William Dean Howells, ca. 1900.

The title of the novel, like the persistent nostalgia for Des Vaches, Indiana, ramifies with a number of intricate meanings. Indian summer generally is used today in the same way that it was in the 1880s: it refers to the sudden appearance in mid- to late-autumn of a period of unusual warmth and sunshine. It is summer's last stand, in the face of the inevitable commencement of frigid winter. One can see immediately how this is a wonderful metaphor for human life and sexuality, and especially within the context of this lonely newsman, given one final shot at romance in the capital of wonder and romance for the entire western world. First and foremost, the title suggests what today we might call the onset of a mid-life crisis, a phenomenon that

is not altogether unusual in the lives of mid- to late-fortysomethings who have themselves given the best years of their lives to the profession of their choice. For Colville, going off to Italy to study the buildings is sort of like today's mid-life banker buying a red Porsche or a Harley, growing a ponytail, roaming planet Earth in search of exotic new pleasures. But here, Colville's rebirth is set to occur in the center of human Renaissance, fittingly enough.

This luminously engaging story about Victorians leisurely enjoying the beauty of Florence should convince every reader of the stunning virtuosity of its author, his sheer talent for the apt phrase and the lively verb.

The concept of Indian summer thus constitutes a second chance, one final leap into our future—and our pasts.

But unlike the denizens of Howells's lifetime, today people often do not realize that the term derives from a stereotype of the Native Americans. In the same sense as the old term "Indian giver," it suggests the trickster qualities that those natives were supposed to show in their behaviors. Thus, Indian summer can mean that this idea of a second chance is nothing more than an illusion. The sunny days of seventy-five degrees in mid-November are pleasant enough, but cold and windy snowstorms are just around the corner. The title also, ironically, sounds almost like "Indiana Summer"—invoking, again, that nostalgia for his old station in Hoosier life. Thus the title of the novel represents the torn sentiments of its author and of the culture in which it was written. It is never altogether clear how we are to understand this lengthy stay in Europe by Colville. Or rather, perhaps this is precisely the issue at stake: to what extent can we escape our pasts and reinvent ourselves in a new (or old) world? Is rebirth even possible, even in the city most known for the rebirth of human civilization?

As such, the novel becomes, though set in Italy, quintessentially a story about the American identity. And for me, facing roughly the same stage of my career as Colville does in the novel, *Indian Summer* resonates deeply with both the pride I feel for what I have accomplished, as well as the insecurity and the longing for something more—the sheer yearning of those earlier days, when I thought the world held so much beauty that I might actually explode if I thought about it too much. I feel great poignancy for old Colville, knowing that I'm a lot like him.

This luminously engaging story about Victorians leisurely enjoying the beauty of Florence should convince every reader of the stunning virtuosity of its author, his sheer talent for the apt phrase and the lively verb. Howells was not only a wonderful builder of a long tale, but his sentence-level attention to finding the precise wording is almost unparalleled in nineteenth-century American literature. He was certainly recognized as a master craftsman throughout almost his entire career by his peer writers, including his good friend Mark Twain, who was no slouch at turning a perfect sentence. By way of illustration, we can turn to a couple of examples of his well-wrought sentences: regarding Colville's melancholy he states, "He was no longer young, that was true; but with an ache of old regret he felt that he had not yet lived his life, that his was a baffled destiny, an arrested fate." And his sketch of Colville's lamentable dancing is brief and comical: "He walked around like a bear in a pen; he capered to and fro with a futile absurdity. . ."

Much more could be said about the merits of *Indian Summer*, but I would not want to spoil the tale for those who might actually pick it up and read it for themselves. Colville does indeed change, but Howells is no mere romancer: the two important women who come into his life

represent different kinds of futures, and the reader figures out the solution at precisely the moment when Colville does. And like Colville, we are introduced ever so slowly and gently to the high society of the Florence of that era, with all its mannerisms and effects. The subtle masks of many of the characters are as mysterious to the reader as they often are to our intrepid hero, so that another joy is to perceive bit by bit the reality of a lost world of wealth and decadence, all seen through the fresh eyes of a neophyte. On these and other scores, it's a very fine novel.

All of this praise should lead to a particular question: Whatever happened to William Dean Howells? Once a staple in the teaching of American literature, his work is often little more than an afterthought these days. Like other notable novelists who produced a great deal and had a monumental impact on our national literature and on the international literary scene (such as Sinclair Lewis, John Steinbeck, Pearl Buck, and lately Saul Bellow, all of whom won the Nobel Prize), Howells no longer commands the attention that he once did from either teachers or general readers.

The reasons for this are unclear. Besides the diminishing stamina for novel-reading among our youth, as Facebook, Twitter, texting, and e-mail become the dominant modes of literary expression, it is still not immediately obvious why Howells has become lost in the shuffle of our national literary history, especially by teachers. Perhaps my readers will forgive me for suggesting that some of it is undoubtedly due to the fact that, like Steinbeck and Lewis, Howells is one of those dead white males who have been asked to give up their seats on the canonical bus, making way for the entrance of numerous other writers onto college syllabi. And it is proper that these new voices have emerged, of course. Our national literature is much richer for the rediscovery in the past thirty years of the powerful fictions produced by, for example, African Americans and women. But it is unfortunate that in expanding our curricula to include them, we have simultaneously required that some of our most prolific writers of truly accomplished fiction have been asked to leave. A few of those exiled passengers plead from the bench of a lonely bus-stop, none more than Howells, who deserves more time in today's English classroom. Several of his novels are both teachable and enjoyable, that magical combination for which all teachers are constantly searching.

In the early twenty-first century, Howells may be on the verge of becoming a "minor" figure, at least for some critics and historians. But he was recognized for most of his lifetime as living up to his apt middle name: he was the "dean" of American letters. As Mark Twain liked to call him, he was "the Boss." A more robust recognition of Howells's place in American literary history is the proper perspective from which a recovery of some of Howells's great achievements might proceed. He has bus fare in one hand, and a suitcase full of fine works in the other. I say we make room for this very old and very crafty passenger.

Hal Bush teaches American literature and culture at Saint Louis University and is the author of two books and numerous articles on topics ranging from American literary figures to the pragmatics of teaching and reading.

Elvis's Hand in Yours

J. D. Buhl

I KNOW. THE OUTLAY OF ELVIS PRESLEY product can seem as gaudy as his 1970's concert outfits. Every year, it seems, there is some anniversary or other excuse to supersede compilations, box sets, and hits collections once thought to be definitive with new must-haves. The mammon-driven myth that chased him to his grave took over long ago, and what was true and good about Elvis's art became mixed with the false, the bad, and the merely expedient.

If one is interested in returning to Presley's music, or discovering previously missed aspects of his oeuvre, the challenge is to find as many original releases as possible, thereby experiencing the music the way it first hit the world. This is certainly true of his religious records. There were only three of those during his lifetime (not counting Christmas albums), but the current glut would have you believe that you missed box-loads of gospel goodies. So I will take this opportunity to earn my keep as a music critic by presenting the *Cresset Guide to the Gospel Recordings of Elvis Presley*.

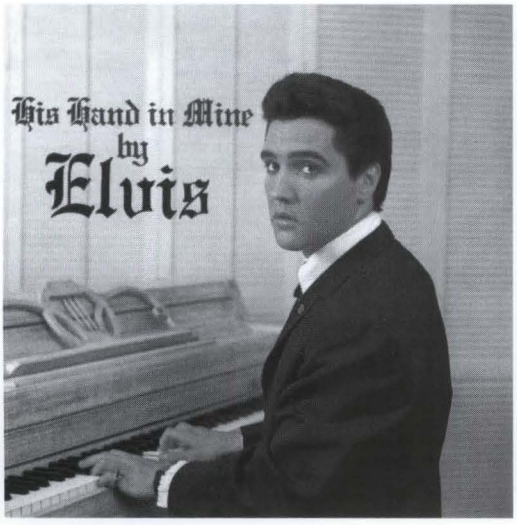
First, avoid any release with "Ultimate," "Complete," "Greatest," or "Hits" in the title. These will not provide you with an ultimate or complete experience of Presley's greatest hymns. Also, bypass *Amazing Grace* and *Take My Hand* (yet more collections), and *Inspirational*, one in a recent series of monochromatic one-word compilations ("Rock," "R&B," "Movies," etc.); neither will these satisfy your spiritual hunger. You are looking for two albums in their 2008 configurations on Sony/BMG. These are *His Hand in Mine* (22673), the original 12-song album plus four bonus tracks, and *How Great Thou Art* (22672), now a thirteen-song album with three bonus tracks. This is the canonical stuff, the recordings that bare the soul of a devout country boy who knew his gospel and loved to sing for the Lord—pure joy drips from every well-turned phrase and meaningful melisma on these albums. You can study their historicity or meditate on their sincerity, but Elvis's intention was to accompany—to come alongside of—fellow Christians on their journey. Here Elvis is not the unwitting revolutionary who divided a nation but the gentle neighbor boy with the forceful, angelic voice who brings so much to the Sunday choir. As he sings these hymns, spirituals, "Dorsey's" and inspirational numbers, Elvis will never sound less like an icon and more like a *friend*.

Elvis's forays into Christian music can be thought of in terms of relish, relief, and routine. *His Hand in Mine* was his first all-gospel long-player, released in 1960. (A four-song EP, *Peace in the Valley*, came out in 1957. Its selections now make up the bonus tracks.) His roots in what Greil Marcus has called "hillbilly Calvinism" flowered in the studio—with the mighty Jordanaires singing behind him. With great relish, he sings his fans into church. He sings the old songs that he knows and loves, impeccably and with much conviction, and the new material he invests with authority. Each song is a story he's been waiting to tell.

By *How Great Thou Art* (1966), Elvis is singing *himself* into church, each Spirit-filled sigh voicing relief from the pointless world of mediocre singles and movie soundtracks he had come to inhabit. The performances are no less convincing and convicting than those of its predecessor, full of energy and subtlety, but the *feel* is different. *His Hand* catches you up in the rhythm of worship, as if you've snuck off with Elvis and his Assembly of God Sunday-School buddies to marvel at Rev. W. H. Brewster's "colored" congregation down the street. With *How Great*, there is a sense of privilege. The listener has entered a room where Elvis is relaxing with meaningful song and is allowed to stay. The singing is robust; the arrangements understated. The addition of a second vocal group makes the sound even richer—and these are not "background" singers; Elvis sings praises or laments from within a worship community. The dispirited performances of

He Touched Me, his third gospel album in 1972, are purely routine. One gets the feeling that an "inspirational" collection was released because that's what the schedule called for. Here gospel gets the shaft that he would eventually give pop, rock, and rhythm & blues.

While I have my favorites (my original LP of *The Sun Sessions* is played out, and I helped make "Burning Love" a Top Ten hit in 1972), it is Elvis the gospel singer who is most loved by this fan. There's no living without "Little



Sister" or the 1968 comeback version of "One Night," but there's no *life* without Christ. Presley gives voice to this necessity with such care that his music—like that of gospel greats Mahalia Jackson, Marion Williams, R. H. Harris, and others—can be truly life-giving.

Church music, whether inside or outside the sanctuary, is meant to be lived, not merely sung. When we listen to a gospel singer, we must attune our ears not to the performance only, but to the life of the performer. That is the mode of so many secular listeners, who appreciate an Al Green or Tramaine Hawkins for the "Wow!" factor. Great God a'mighty, one can be "blown away" by such powerful singers! Awesome! What can so impress an unbeliever are the intensity and the passion in gospel music, not the selfless faith that makes them possible. Christians need to be careful about falling into the same "Wow!" mode of passivity. Gospel music is not just another form of entertainment; we of all consumers should know this.

So, one should listen to Elvis here, and listen *through* him. Outside the Sun material and some early RCA sides, there is no more authentic work in his entire catalog than these two albums. How remarkable that the insouciant swagger and bold sexuality could so quickly be set aside for a more existential kind of need. Marcus places Southern Christianity within a set of cultural forces that "could have held [Elvis] back and worn him down as easily as they gave him life." The Hillbilly Cat sings as if reminded there is a freedom for which he did not have to fight. All the hard dreaming that generated respect and refusal regarding his early circumstances required a fierce pride with which to remake himself. There is pride here, but it is a Pauline pride taken in what the Lord has done and can do. Elvis sounds pleased that a place has been made for humility in his professional life.

When Elvis sings about "living below in this old sinful world," he knows more about it than he ever expected to. There is no sweeter sixties performance than that of *How Great*'s "Stand By Me." The prescient poignancy runs chillingly deep when Elvis sings of being tossed like a ship in the raging storms of life—those storms would never let up. On a 1967 bonus track, Elvis asks what could have been a life-saving question, "Why don't we call on Him before we lose our way?" You can hear on this album the passion and precision, the great vitality of his talent that was otherwise bottled up, ready to explode. The road to the comeback begins here. Later, Elvis would become confused about just what it means to have "the Lord always walking by my side," and the confusion of such a mythic American could not help but provoke our own. These performances of songs by Mosie Lister, Thomas A. Dorsey, Albert Brumley and others resound with the last bit of spiritual clarity available to a genius child of God.

Listen, then, to the life in these performances. May they help you hear your own.

J. D. Buhl is currently living in Philadelphia.

Herding Cats
An Interfaith Adventure

Thomas C. Willadsen

This year it was the Presbyterians' turn to host the annual interfaith Thanksgiving Eve worship service. Actually, it was our turn last year, but the Roman Catholic bishop had announced plans to close a church which has taken part in the past services, so last year they hosted the service, perhaps for the last time.

Thanksgiving is a non-liturgical holiday, as a Lutheran colleague put it, which means, in practical terms, anything goes.

This year we followed the same pattern to plan the service as we have in prior years. As host pastor, I sent an invitation to the meeting to plan the service to my colleagues in late September. The first Monday in October the representatives from the various congregations came to the afternoon meeting. There were two United Methodists, a UCC pastor, two Roman Catholics, two Lutherans [though one of the Lutherans is a UCC pastor], myself, and the high school student who is job shadowing me this semester.

Everyone arrived at the appointed hour. And everyone said something snide or sarcastic to my job shadower. "Are you sure you want to learn about the ministry from *him*?" "Well, sometimes you learn more by seeing what *not* to do." "Presbyterian, well you must be a good speller." These responses did not surprise me one little bit. I've worked with these jokers for eight years. Still, I remember the first time I received this treatment. Twenty years ago I was attending a meeting of the Coalition Against Anti-Asian Violence in New York City. I was the lone non-Asian in attendance. One of the leaders of the coalition was the pastor of a Chinese Presbyterian church in the city. "Hey, I'm a candidate for the ministry in the Presbyterian church!" I informed the pastor warmly. "I am very sorry to hear that," he replied with a gravity that was just over-the-top enough to indicate he was kidding.

I think.

At our planning meeting we looked around the table at who was not there. The Baha'is, the Jews, the Muslims, the Hindus, the Sikhs. We had no representative of the Hmong community, the largest non-Anglo ethnic group in our city.

One of the pastors volunteered to get word about the service to some contacts he had in various non-Christian congregations. Looking back (I've been doing that a lot this month), it's clear to me why we only had Christians around the planning table: we're the ones whose congregations are large enough to support full time, paid leadership. The Muslim who will speak works as a banker; the Jew is in education. The Hindu and Sikh leaders are physicians. None could get away in the middle of the afternoon to represent his faith.

As Thanksgiving grew closer I waited to hear which communities would be participating, and what they would be doing. The last week before Thanksgiving the bulletin still looked like this:

> Welcome
> Something from the Jews
> "This is My Song"
> Something from the Baha'is
> Litany of Thanksgiving—which two Christians want parts????
> Offering—to support the domestic abuse services center
> Something from the Muslims
> Sikhs!!!?
> "Let There Be Peace on Earth"
> Go in Peace

Most years this service is not especially interesting visually. Once we had a group of traditional Hmong dancers who were marvelous and exotic. This year no one knew whom to contact to extend an invitation to the Hmong. We decided to ask each group that participated to share a ritual or action of some kind, something important to their faith, something that will help us encounter them in a way deeper than words. It was difficult to convey exactly what we wanted. In fact, it was difficult to communicate with representatives of other faiths at all.

Email makes it possible to spread confusion faster than ever before. One illusion of email is that because it is written it is unambiguous. But when messages regarding a confirmation class's trip to a local mosque precede invitations to participate in the service, only the former are responded to.

I received a copy of one email regarding the interfaith service which consisted of directions to a reasonably priced kabob restaurant in a neighboring community.

As we counted down to Thanksgiving we struggled with publicizing the service. We want the wider community to know that people of all faiths can come together for thanksgiving and peace. We simply did not know which faiths would be present. We decided not to list "sponsoring communities" and "those invited to participate." By the deadline for publication, only those who had indicated they were participating were listed, which makes us appear a little less broad-minded than we would like.

As I labored to get the bulletin done, waiting for correct spellings and precise terminology, I realized the problem, such as it is, is completely my own. I need the information in time for the newspaper's deadline. I need to have the bulletin done in time for it to be printed. I need to not have people approach me three minutes before the service starts and ask when their ritual will appear. I need leaders from other traditions to come to my building, fit my time limits ("3 to 5 minutes, please, gotta be done by 8 PM") and then go home. Happy freakin' Thanksgiving!

Then I imagine being the leader of a tiny faith community in a sea of Christians. Would I feel safe, trusted, willing to share my faith, in their building, on their terms? "Hey, minority person! Please let me encounter you, on the one holiday when I can put aside my tradition and leave the door cracked for your bit of domesticated exoticism. Can I pencil you in for 7:20?" And I wonder why *those people* do not return my calls.

The tragic part is I really am curious and interested in other traditions. I really want to know, but a day before the service I cannot think of another way to build a bridge.

Maybe we could start with some reasonably priced kabobs. I know a place.

The Reverend Thomas C. Willadsen is pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

ON JUSTICE IN AMERICA

The phrase "fair trial"
always reminds me
of a delightful Western
I saw in 1948.

Someone said of the villain,
"We'll give him a fair trial

and hang him
first thing in the morning."

Dorothea Kewley

Engaged Lutheranism

Joel Kurz

In the fall of 2006, I was a rare Lutheran at a Catholic Worker national gathering in Iowa—the only others were all *former*. Waiting around for dinner in the large hall that first night, I struck up a conversation with a woman who soon was joined by her good friends—the legendary folksinger Utah Phillips and his wife, Joanna. After I sat down at the table with them, Utah began asking me questions about myself. On learning that I was a Lutheran pastor, he asked wryly, "So, where do you Luth?" I don't remember what I said after cracking a smile and thinking of the smart-aleck answer "Duluth." At that time I was five years out of full-time parish ministry, doing only supply assignments while reluctantly awaiting a call, so I wasn't sure where I Luthed, or even if I did at all.

But even more than his question, his bold admission the next night helped spur me on to an answer. Utah began his performance by introducing himself as "an unrepentant Unitarian." To someone like me, who had a hard time declaring myself an "unrepentant Lutheran," his "heretical audacity" got me thinking about my relationship with the denominational title I've borne my whole life—about my reservations and the possibility of claiming it unapologetically.

Of all the criticisms that I've heard and voiced of Lutheranism over the years, the one that has stuck with me the most is that Lutheran belief seldom translates into life. Admittedly, it's not too far from Gandhi's observation of Christianity in general, that Christians are so unlike their Christ. One easily could counter by pointing out that such remarks place emphasis on the sinner instead of the Savior and therefore deal with exception instead of essence. Granted, Lutheranism has a long and vibrant history of missions (both foreign and domestic), as well as a variety of diaconal or social ministries, but the criticism isn't so much an institutional attack as it is an address of personal and congregational failure. To borrow Utah's terminology, it's a matter of not Luthing where we live.

Lutheranism is self-defined by the exposition of belief set forth in *The Book of Concord*, but as an expression of Christianity, it is a lived faith that encapsulates all of earthly existence from birth and baptism to death and resurrection. It involves doctrine, yes, but doctrine is not its whole reality. It is incarnational and sacramental; it concerns being the Body of Christ and enfleshing the gift of salvation in this good but wounded world.

Beginning with Luther's *Small Catechism* is proof enough. With his treatment of the Commandments, Luther demonstrates that holding to the true God in faith and life leads not only to the *personal avoidance* of wrongdoing but also to the *active engagement* in the wellbeing of others. And at the end, he reminds that the Lord's Supper is needed not only so that we learn *to believe* that Christ died for our sin, out of great love, but also that through the sacrament we learn from him *to love* God and all people.

It's far from fair to say that Lutherans are quietists entirely disengaged from the world of which we are a part, but it's also far from true to say that the Pietists were only concerned with individual salvation and the state of one's heart. The father of Pietism, Philip Jacob Spener, in his celebrated 1675 treatise *Pia Desideria*, called for reform in a Lutheranism as individually and corporately corrupt as the Roman Catholicism of the previous century that Luther had railed against. Spener recalled these words of Ignatius, "Those that profess themselves to be Christ's are known not only by what they say but also by what they practice," as well as Gregory Nazianzen's words that Basil's "speech was like thunder because his life was like lightning" (82, 104). Right belief and right livelihood cannot be had at each other's expense.

Lutheranism, like its child Pietism, can devolve (as can any expression of Christianity) into a self-satisfied and self-concerned way of being that has little, if any, engagement with

faith or life in their fullest meaning. Taking writings like Luther's "Fourteen Consolations" (written in 1520 to comfort Prince Frederick during a severe illness) might give the false impression that Luther thought of faith as solely concerned with internal evil and insular blessing. Yet Luther articulated and held to a faith in which believing and living, praying and doing, receiving and giving all center on God enfleshed among us, engaging the world he came to redeem. Summarizing Luther's vocational theology, Gustaf Wingren wrote: "That faith is coupled with love is in fact the same miracle as that in which God became man.... When faith works in love, it descends and is incarnated, as God became man in Christ.... Man's action is a medium of God's love for others" (41, 180).

The Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh set forth "the fourteen precepts of engaged Buddhism" so that his tradition would not be purely personal and cut-off from wider humanity. I have come to think in terms of engaged Lutheranism. By engaged, I mean both senses of the word: *pledged to* as well as *involved with*. Since Christians are engaged to Christ as bride to groom, it follows that we are tied to him. We exist, as does Christ our Lord, for the sake of each person in the world. And because of that, we involve ourselves with the pressing needs of our "neighbor" while waiting for "the marriage feast of the Lamb which has no end."

Two years ago, while observing the environs of the parish I had just begun to serve, I noticed a steady stream of diverse people (throughout the day) walking across the remote end of our deep back lot adjacent to a subsidized apartment complex. Once back there, I gazed down at a hard packed winding footpath and began to wonder. Thanks to parishioners willing to take a risk with me, we cut that footpath straighter and wider and lined it with gravel; and behind it we started a community vegetable garden. As a joint venture, the path and garden have enabled us not only to acknowledge our neighbors' presence but also to meet them while sharing several kinds of sustenance and making their lives a bit better. (Many thanks also to the Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith, which awarded this endeavor an extremely helpful grant.)

I still have reservations about the "official representations" of Lutheranism as a denomination, the various limitations and extremes entailed, but I've made real progress toward being an "unrepentant" Lutheran since meeting Utah. In large part, it's due to the restored understanding and practice among Lutherans of the works of mercy as integral to the life of faith. And I can honestly say that I'm encouraged by the renewed sense of vocation that is leading people to get engaged and Luth where they live, as well as in those far-flung places of need otherwise out of sight.

Utah died in the spring of 2008 at the age of seventy-three. Less well-known than his rich legacy of story and song is his final testament of social engagement: a rotating shelter in his hometown of Nevada City, California, that provides lodging, food, and "the ministry of presence" to people who have nowhere else to go. Utah called it Hospitality House—a tribute to the Catholic Worker house of hospitality in Utah that literally saved his life decades before. Area churches still carry on that good work, and as Utah was glad to tell me, and I'm even gladder still to know, two of them are Lutheran.

Joel Kurz Luths in and around Warrensburg, Missouri.

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THE POTTER'S REVOLUTION

The potter became the clay
when God's grace inhabited
the woman, formed an earthen
vessel in likeness of a servant,
washer of feet, cheek turner,
healer; not the desired rebel warlord.
His revolution birthed in a stable
while angels sang alleluia;
climaxed on a cross while
the earth shook and rocks split;
cheated death forever while
we mourned and doubted.
Rejoice with the angels:
God's grace walks
among us bringing peace like
rain that breaks the drought.

John Dreyer

Good News from Nicaragua

Ron Rivera, in memoriam

Richard M. Chapman

THE DAY WAS HOT AND VERY MUGGY—LIKE most any afternoon in late August in Managua. I was standing atop La Loma Tiscapa, the city's highest point, distinguished further by a large silhouette sculpture in the figure of Nicaragua's patriot son and national hero, Augusto César Sandino. On the hilltop also stand several large memorials to martyrs and heroes of the resistance against the long Somoza dictatorship, and an exhibit of photos and memorabilia devoted to Sandino's life. Had I known the words of Carlos Mejía Godoy's beautiful anthem a bit better I might have broken into song: "*Ay, Nicaragua, Nicaraguita, la flor mas linda de mi querer... Pero ahora que ya sos libre, Nicaraguita, Yo te quiero mucho mas.*" (Nicaragua, little Nicaragua, loveliest flower of my longing... But now that you are free, little Nicaragua, I love you so much more.)

I took it all in, inspired and thrilled by the history on display; but now, after two hours, I was fading, in dire need of some liquid refreshment. I purchased a booklet of photos at the tiny museum and thanked one of the young female attendants—*el museo era muy interesante, gracias*—and then inquired where I might fetch something cold to drink. She motioned back towards the hillcrest behind the museum but quickly moved along side me and offered her company. Turned out she was also a student in Managua but lived a distance south of the city.

Usted es cristiano, no? she asked effortlessly, really more a statement than a question. You're a Christian, aren't you?

Her abrupt, knowing query caught me off guard, but it seemed sincere and well-intentioned. I answered directly after the slightest hesitation. *Sí, soy cristiano.* She just had an inkling about me, she said, adding that she was one as well. Perhaps it's one of those things where it takes one to know one. But I still wondered what had she noticed about me? The crosses I wear were out of plain sight, hidden under clothing. Perhaps the crosses I bear were more visible. She might have observed my incessant mumbling as I read Spanish descriptions to myself in the museum, thinking them prayers for the country. Perhaps I resembled to her one of many well-meaning gringos, come from abroad to save Nicaragua. We chatted briefly about her life, her studies, her home, and parted ways. I enjoyed the conversation. She made me feel welcome, at ease, at home, cared for. I felt solidarity, common cause with her. Still parched, I ordered up a cold Coke and slaked my thirst in the shadow of Sandino.

What does it mean to be a Christian? What would it look like to live out the words "dedicated to the Christian life" in my university's mission statement? It is salutary, I think, to open up such questions to view on occasion, to take a closer look, even to subvert the answers to which we've grown accustomed. My *hermana*, my Nicaraguan sister, had left me two gifts. She had modeled a way of being in the world, sharing humbly life's joys and sorrows in community, as with me. And she gave me a question to ponder.

Some two weeks following my encounter atop Tiscapa, I brushed up against the gospel in Nicaragua in a most unexpected way—I got acquainted with a potter named Ron Rivera.

The gospel writer in Luke reminds us that traditions are moored in history; stories are indispensable to who we are. They

are many; they compete for our attention and allegiance; where we come out determines much about whom we become and where we will go.

> *[Many] have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have [happened] among us, just as they were handed on to us . . .*

I am struck by two things in this text. First, we sense the writer's enthusiasm, nay compulsion, to tell his narrative of the gospel—it is a story he must tell. The writer, furthermore, endeavors to anchor a narrative amongst many traditions and points of view. I am similarly inspired to tell Ron Rivera's story, because it's an amazing story and because it provides a fresh angle on a familiar one. Luke's author, like a good historian, seeks to provide "authentic knowledge" of the gospel narrative, but I also know that any record loses authenticity as it ages and wears out, its context and applications less regnant. Having several gospel traditions is surely a blessing and not a curse. Here is a fresh narrative of things I learned from eyewitnesses in Nicaragua about the life of Ron Rivera. We shift from the gospel of Luke to the gospel of Ron, if you will, but I wish to punctuate Ron's journey with snippets from the evangel of Jesus, to see his life and his witness in that context.

Ron's story is one of promise, of hope, of life... finally, it is a story about water—clean, sparkling, pure, life-giving water.

Sadly, I met Ron Rivera only in death, when I attended his funeral memorial and celebration of life on 6 September 2008 on Managua's Central American University Campus. The occasion was profoundly sad, but equally joyous and deeply moving. Ron's story is one of promise, of hope, of life... finally, it is a story about water—clean, sparkling, pure, life-giving water.

> *Jesus asked them, "What are you looking for? They replied, "Teacher, where are you staying?" "Come and see," he answered.*

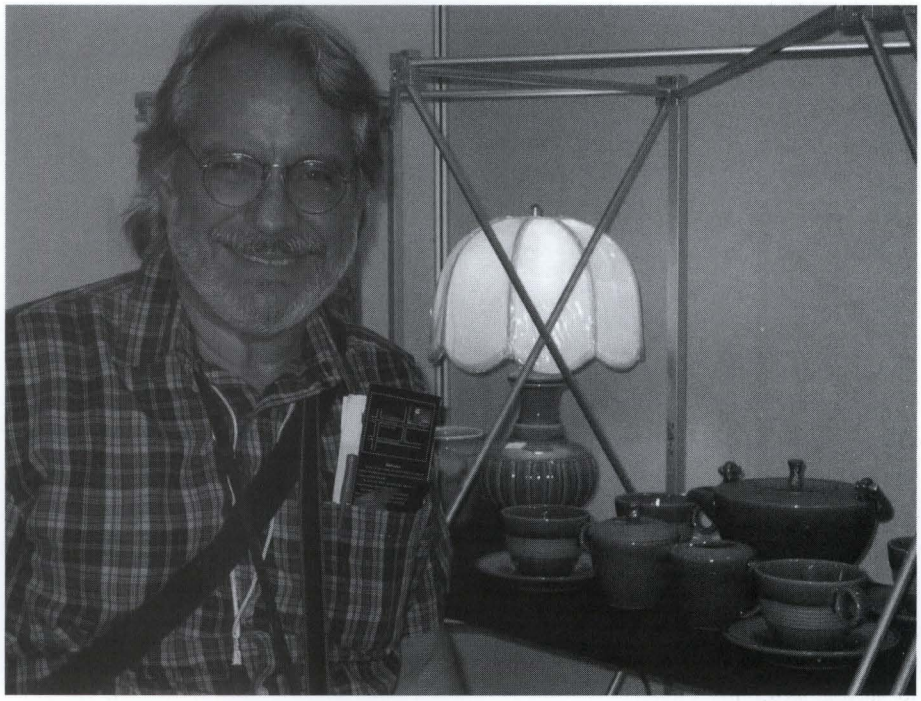
Ron was born in Puerto Rico and grew up in the Bronx. As a young man he joined the Peace Corps, getting acquainted with the struggles and hardships of poor folk in Panama and Ecuador. His journey continued in Mexico where he met a fresh vision of education and human progress in the community gathered around the radical cleric Ivan Illich. Illich had heard a call for liberation and empowerment of the majorities in the barrios and fields of Latin America. Feeling ill-equipped and disengaged, Rivera was drawn to put his hands to creative work and took up pottery. He returned to Puerto Rico to establish his own workshop, but restive and needing more, he returned to Ecuador, and then visited insurgent Bolivia before landing for a time in Miami. Still learning from the book of life, he worked there as a bricklayer, did social work for struggling Cubans from the Mariel boatlift, and completed a master's program in development. This training got him a return ticket to Ecuador where he worked in a series of development projects.

> *I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it in all its fullness.*

In 1988 Ron moved to Nicaragua to become united with Kathy, his first love, and to support the country's youthful, beleaguered revolution. His second love, pottery, continued to blossom, energizing Ron as he rapidly transcended the role of artist to become teacher and community organizer. He criss-crossed the country, setting up workshops, advancing and experimenting with new techniques and materials, and above all giving dignity, pride, and recognition to scores of

Nicaraguan potters. As Ron put it, "I want to know each and every one of Nicaragua's artists." Then in 1998, Hurricane Mitch blew in and Ron's world changed forever. The storm surge was unimaginable. Winds, mudslides, floods, and ruined crops killed Nicaraguans by the thousands, and many thousands more throughout Central America.

Lord, when was it that we saw you thirsty, and gave you drink? ... I tell you this: anything you did for one of my brothers and sisters here, however humble, you did for me.



Indeed, Ron was stunned to discover that the mere lack of clean drinking water compounded the misery—and mortality—of so many young Nicas in Mitch's wake. The memory of a filtering technology devised by a Guatemalan chemist he'd met years earlier in Ecuador rushed back. It promised a solution and impelled Ron Rivera on a mission to wed this technology with a clay-fired form that could filter impure water. So the "filtron" was born through painstaking trial and error. Ron famously held forth the device for audiences in North America, declaring exuberantly and not a little irony, "I hold in my hand a real WMD—a weapon of mass bacteriological destruction!" Ron committed himself to the promise of crystalline water not for Nicas only but for people around the globe. He could cite backwards and forwards the pertinent and disheartening figures—one sixth of the world's population lack clean water, 80 percent of illnesses in the developing world stem from contaminated water. Every year 1.7 million children under five years of age die from impure water.

Greater love hath no one than to lay down his life for a friend.

Ron's relentless efforts to produce a working, dependable water filtration device made him a globetrotter, a truly committed world citizen. He found his way to Vietnam and Cambodia, to Sri Lanka and Indonesia, to sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East, sharing the filtron technology and working with local potters to start factories and reproduce the clay form that might snatch life from death and disease. Last summer he visited Nigeria to set up a new factory and while there contracted the deadliest form of malaria. It was detected upon his return to Nicaragua but too late to administer the medications that might have saved his life. By the time he died, Ron Rivera had worked with potters around the world to create thirty filter factories in about the same number of countries.

You will recognize them by the fruits they bear.... Not everyone who calls me

"Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my heavenly Father.

I've learned that Ron Rivera was a self-proclaimed atheist and not a Christian. This raises interesting questions I cannot readily answer. The realities of the Kingdom are assuredly larger, grander, and more capacious than all human efforts or words to encapsulate them—no metaphor is adequate. What about Ron? Perhaps Ron was too engaged in the vital struggles of the world to be concerned about labels. Perhaps he had grown weary, skeptical of politics—and of religious claims as just another form of politics—to be bothered. Maybe he just had too much work to accomplish to sweat the theological details. Perhaps he even had some affinity with some of those old Cretan battle axes I grew to admire in Nikos Kazantzakis's great novel *Captain Mikalis*—in the crisis of Crete, in the crisis of life, waiting for God wasn't always efficacious, best to take action because God didn't seem to be there at the most critical junctures. Maybe God wants—indeed needs—our help, and religion prevents us from acting, from doing what we know cries out to be done. Ron saw what needed doing, and he did it. I would like to do it as well.

I am an honest man
From the land where palms grow
Before I die
I want to share these poems
From my soul.

My poems are clear green,
They are flaming crimson,
My poems are a wounded fawn
Searching through the hills.

With the poor people of the earth
I want to cast my lot.
The coolness of the mountains
Pleases me more than the sea.

José Martí, *Guantanamera*

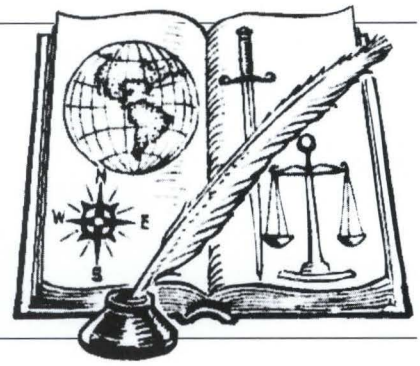
Managua is far away now, the days here much cooler, but challenging questions remain. I still search after answers that will quench the mind's thirst. Christian or not, Ron Rivera was engaged in bringing the kingdom of peace, hope and life—the water of life—to so many in Nicaragua, Latin America, and around the globe. And so I take heart, my soul unburdened, knowing that the gospel is alive and well and living in Nicaragua. Turns out Nicaragua is exporting revolution after all, though not the kind some feared in the 1980s. We should all take heart. God bless the memory, the life and the ongoing work of Ron Rivera. May we, like him, apply our minds and hands to growing the kingdom—*así en la tierra como en el cielo*. On earth as it is in heaven. AMEN

Richard Chapman is Associate Professor of History at Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota. The author wishes to extend his deepest gratitude for the gracious hospitality of Joe Mulligan and María López Vigil, Catholics by training and tradition, good Christians by example, and exemplary human beings by practice. López Vigil's essay on Ron Rivera, "The Constant Potter," a near companion during the writing of this homily, may be accessed in English translation at http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/3997.

Reviewed in this issue...

How to Talk about Books You Haven't Read

The Rhetoric of Certitude

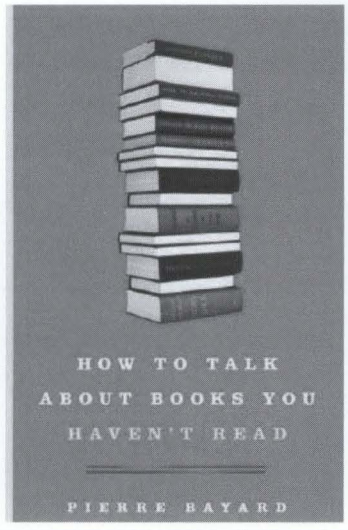


"Who is Mark Noll?" was an awkward question coming from an academic administrator, accented by his dazed look when I mentioned *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. I left that Christian campus with mixed feelings, appreciative of meeting goodhearted professors but pricked deeply by that conversation—his obvious unawareness of a leading Christian thinker.

I have found myself in his role, such as sharing the speaking platform with Martin Bernal before reading his *Black Athena*. Even more uncomfortable was sitting in England's famous "pump room" at Bath prior to reading *Northanger Abbey* while being surrounded by Jane Austin veterans—my students.

Well, according to one French literary superstar, we need not feel guilty anymore.

Author Pierre Bayard, a professor of literature at the University of Paris VIII, suggests that we often find ourselves in *the dialogue of the deaf*. We discuss books unread by others or ourselves, or the fragments we recall from others' recollections. He cogently argues that when we skim books we usually are left with a memory of "a different book" than the one recalled by other readers or intended by the author. Bayard finds professors especially feeling guilty for not having read an even longer list of books. Rather, we should be more concerned with being able to place a key author or book in the appropriate place on the shelf of our *collective library*—the collection of books common to our extended community. These are the big books we all should know.



How to Talk about Books You Haven't Read
Pierre Bayard
Bloomsbury USA, 2007.
208 pages
$14.00

Review by
Jerry Pattengale
Indiana Wesleyan University

He intrigues us with his veneer of sincerity in dealing with the constraints we feel as readers. The first constraint is that we're under "the obligation to read" with special attention to a "canonical list" of any given community. During his beloved postmodern era, most "great books" lists prove problematic. Though the "canon" surviving the Middles Ages and enshrined during Modernity resonated with millions of readers seeking answers about the human condition, postmodern "classics" lists include everything from Proust and Clancy to cookbooks and ecology guides. Author Nick Rennison accents this subjective list approach with his collection of *100-Must Read* series

ranging from *Classic Novels* and *Crime Novels* to *Science Fiction.* A second constraint is "the obligation to read a book in its entirety," which is commonly violated by fast-paced schedules. To compound matters, the third constraint is the academy's expectation that in order to discuss a book we must have read it.

Bayard's imagery seems to work *prima facie* as the proliferation of books keeps our heads spinning. Bayard's literary illustrations provide context for his strategy, allegedly being transparent about his own time with the respective texts, e.g., citations are marked with "SB" = skimmed book, "UB" = unknown, "FB" = forgotten, "++" = extremely positive, "+" = positive, etc. It's as if Woody Allen subscripts pop-up with the truth about Bayard's reading life, accenting Oscar Wilde's boast, "I never read a book I must review; it prejudices you so." Bayard contends that "it's totally possible to carry on an engaging conversation about a book you haven't read — including, and perhaps especially, with someone else who hasn't read it either."

Bayard positions reading as a social gauge, for hobnobbing at cocktail parties and impressing peers. If education targets such shallow ends, then we might as well scrap books altogether and save additional time learning his antics of non-reading.

From *The Man Without Qualities*, Bayard has us follow a laughable love-struck General Stumm into his country's imperial library. He intended to become educated to impress a woman until realizing it would take over ten thousand years to read all of the library's books, and that's if writing stopped. This sense of hopelessness resonates with academics as we walk up to Claremont's Honnold/Mudd Library or approach the Widener's steps. The Education section alone at Miami University's (OH) King Library is beyond one's reading capacity, and the same with the New York City Public Library's World War II collection.

The disheveled old librarian, Bayard's hero, reveals to Stumm his secret for keeping his large collection in perspective—he doesn't read any of them, only the catalogues. "His love of books—of *all* books—incites him to remain prudently on the periphery, for fear that too pronounced an interest in one of them might cause him to neglect the others."

I suppose there's some freedom in this perspective. And likewise most of us have our favorite lit reviews, such as *Books & Culture, Times Literary Supplement, Image, Christian Scholar's Review, The Chronicle Review, The Atlantic, The Virginia Quarterly Review* and NewPages.com (which will introduce you to dozens more). So maybe Bayard is on to something with his notion of prioritizing the place of these books in the library—important titles on the right shelves, associated with the right schools of thought.

His best contribution to our reading peril, and an image that has staying power, is his notion of our "inner library" developed in his section on "Encounters in Society." These are books we've actually read or have a confident familiarity with—"around which every personality is constructed, and which then shapes each person's individual relationship to books and to other people." When we brush up against someone without familiarity with one of our titles, or with no or very limited overlap with inner libraries, we find ourselves in awkward situations. We should be more concerned about a book's place among the "collective library" than whether we read it thoroughly. Bayard argues that "we never talk about a book unto itself," but a whole set of books. Each title "serves as a temporary symbol for a complete conception of culture." Allegedly these inner libraries "have made us who we are, and they cannot be separated from us without causing us suffering." For a book championing non-

reading, the previous statement is in tension with his own thinking.

This clever book accents the ingenuity of Bayard, also author of *Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?* But don't be snookered with the whole enterprise. Like Thoreau's *Walden*, Bayard lacks full disclosure and has readers (and reviewers) believing that he actually doesn't read books. This is asinine—he's an esteemed literature professor!

But here's the main rub. Bayard positions reading as a social gauge, for hobnobbing at cocktail parties and impressing peers. If education targets such shallow ends, then we might as well scrap books altogether and save additional time learning his antics of non-reading. At the least, if our main concern (as Bayard argues) is social acceptance we could limit our reading to Michael Dirda's entertaining *Classics for Pleasure.*

Bayard's book is painted in a counterintuitive hue, another rub. He leans heavily on Oscar Wilde's *Artist as Critic* and *To Read or Not To Read,* which evidently he's digested a few times in preparation for this treatise on doing just the opposite—"anti" or "non" reading. My readers group, local Inklings of sorts, asked me, "Did you read the book before reviewing it?"

There's a literary swagger in Bayard's boast about non-reading, and references to various social exchanges that venerate crafty wordsmithing and psychoanalysis over careful reading. One illustration from David Lodge's *Changing Places* includes the game "Humiliation" in which rivaling professors attempt to persuade others of books they haven't read, often with details heard secondhand. The winner is the one telling the biggest lie and fooling the most.

Though a worthwhile read, the book fizzles as Bayard wades in the same relativistic waters tread by Stanley Fish. Bayard attempts to establish a case for our "inner books," much akin to Fish's "interpretive communities." Books, according to Bayard, take on special meaning to each person, and the intended meaning remains unknowable to anyone. He argues that "we must profoundly transform our relationship to books," and "accept a kind of evolution of our psychology.... what is essential is to speak about ourselves and not about books, or to speak about ourselves by way of books." This quintessential existential approach can make a historian like me queasy, and rips the "non" out of "the law of non-contradiction."

The climax of this suspect trajectory is Bayard's claim that in the art of non-reading we become creators. The most important thing is that the books are about us, and this gives us the freedom to create our own text (see page 180).

This fun book with helpful observations goes awry here, offering what Jay McInerney calls a "nonreading utopia"—"a charming but ultimately terrifying prospect—a world full of writers and artists" (*New York Times*, 11 November 2007). Bayard's model has us affixing gelatin manuscripts to a revolving Wittenberg Door without nails—or anything else that's objectively real. Though we begin with practical help for daunting reading expectations (his useful concepts of inner libraries and veneration of lit reviews), we end with theories more conflicting than those gems in Alan Sokal's hoax (in *Social Text,* 1996). The only difference is that Sokal intended to write camouflaged nonsense littered with ideological jargon pleasing to reviewers.

While I recommend Bayard's book, don't be hoodwinked by his mythical author status. Unlike the unnamed narrator in *The Bleak House,* the first-person is not really Bayard—though his writing finesse creates a voice as believable as other fictional male protagonists like J. D. Salinger's Holden Caulfield and Chaim Potok's Asher Lev. Bayard seems to be following Wilde's literary mentoring, "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth" (*Intentions*).

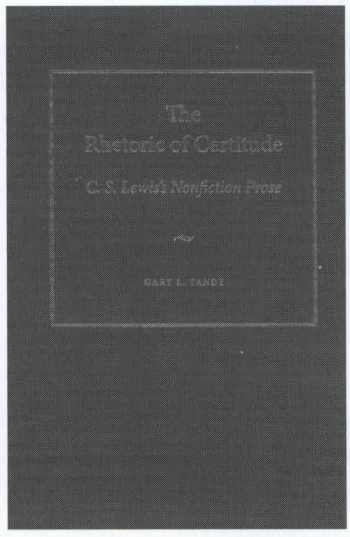
Another objection to Bayard's thesis is his omission of the love of reading. It splits one's dendrites to think (as Fish also seems to imply) that one can venerate the art of writing without studying it. While the usefulness of the humanities and the rationale for its place in college curricula is a debate for another time, the love of literature is not.

To miss Jane Austin's defense of novels while describing Catherine and Isabella's relationship forged in the details of Bath is to miss the author. To miss the hundreds of T. Harry William's vignettes of the "wild man" days is to miss the magnetism of *Huey Long*, "a demagogue and a clown" who once answered the door naked and while drunk, convincing the foreign ambassador it was an American custom. To opt for *Cliffs Notes* or reviews of *Dorian Gray* is to miss a truth articulated about vanity and hubris, and Dorian's constant tension of thinking about "the desecration that was in store for the fair face on the canvas." Or the plea for sensibility by Basil Howard, Gray's painter, to a hallow-souled Gray hours after the poisonous death of Gray's lover (fittingly named, Sibyl Vane). The trajectory of Bayard's "creator" thesis would evolve millions of Patroclus figures dying for reasons other than for an arrogant Achilles' plight that for two millennia has resonated with the human condition. Likewise, in the nonreading scheme a secondhand *Hamlet* is stripped of its appeal and "My Queen" becomes platonic. And lesser gems lose all sense of place on the shelf, such as, Dubner's *Confessions of a Hero-Worshipper,* with its vivid images of Franco Harris's life-giving presence in everyday, nondescript Pittsburg.

Imagine the shallowness of Bayard's cocktail party chatter about a Bible not firmly in their inner libraries, boasting the theme of Easter but unaware of the conversations on the cross, recounting parables' points without understanding their purpose. And imagine churches led by preachers excelling in non-reading, vague passionless homilies from clerics that can place the Bible on the right shelf, but with little edification for the self as a whole. And for those imbibing his views of an inner book with changing meaning, meaningless sermons for changing times.

There are many more important questions than "Who is Mark Noll?" But it's in his *Scandal* where Christians find a well-reasoned challenge to return to their heritage of intellectual rigor, to contribute to the "first-order public discourse" and to cultivate scholarly attitudes with "the seriousness that God intends." Establishing strong inner libraries is an important step in this direction, but in addition to and not in place of an aggressive reading schedule.

And if I'm right, reading in between and the lines themselves, I think that's what Bayard is suggesting, though for a much less spiritual cause.



THE RHETORIC OF CERTITUDE:
C. S. LEWIS'S NONFICTION PROSE
Gary L. Tandy
Kent State University Press,
2009
135 pages
$39.95

Review by
James P. Beasley
University of North Florida

WHILE GARY TANDY'S *THE RHETORIC OF CERTITUDE* succeeds in analyzing rhetorical figures in the non-fiction work of C. S. Lewis, it certainly fails in its understanding of Lewis's rhetorical situation. According to Tandy, "The aim of this study is to examine the rhetoric of Lewis's nonfiction prose. Rhetoric is defined broadly to include all the linguistic and literary choices a writer makes in order to communicate with his audience" (xi–xii). To be fair to rhetoric, however, this is a very *narrow* definition of the field. I say narrow, but to be more accurate, I suppose I should say historically narrow. Rhetoric, so defined, limits its relevance merely to authorial intent, rather than exposing the historical values that such rhetorical responses reveal.

Although Tandy writes, "Lewis's dislike of chronological snobbery stemmed from his

realization that his own age was also a 'period'" (9), Tandy rarely allows such knowledge to illuminate his own study. For example, Tandy writes, "Lewis's basic distrust of modernity and preference for older patterns of thought are the threads that run through and unite his large body of prose work. These central attitudes may be seen as a rhetorical stance that Lewis adopted in his nonfiction prose in order to communicate effectively his religious and literary ideas in the modern world" (3). If this is true, then the most important question seems to be which "older patterns of thought" Lewis preferred. By Tandy's own admission, "Lewis would have been in substantial agreement with two principles regarding language stated by the nineteenth century thinker Herbert Spencer in his 'Philosophy of Style'" (31). In this light, Lewis seems aligned with Hugh Blair on issues of taste or even more specifically, the sermonizing of Richard Whately. Yet rather than utilizing the rhetorical theory of Blair or Whately, Tandy turns to classical rhetoric to analyze Lewis's thought, "Turning to Lewis's essays and longer prose works, we find a variety of structural patterns, many of which fit well into the classical format" (66). Why Tandy chooses classical rhetoric, rather than these nineteenth century rhetoricians to illuminate Lewis's work is puzzling.

Another example of Tandy not allowing his own rhetorical research to inform his rhetorical analysis is his treatment of Lewis's audience. Tandy writes, "Lewis's father was a lawyer, and the first thing that strikes one on opening any of Lewis's books is that he is always persuading, always arguing a case. All was forensic; the jury were to be won over and that was all" (31). Yet two pages later, Tandy writes, "Lewis was also aware of the effect a writer's audience can have in determining style. He notes, for example, that Thomas More wrote 'for an audience whose education had for the most part a legal twist, and law is the worst influence on his style'" (33). If Lewis admittedly critiqued the influence of the legal field on one's style, then describing Lewis's style as juridical seems significant in deconstructing Lewis's meaning. In other words, rhetoric is not merely "the choices Lewis made to communicate with his audience," but operates as a field of influence in spite of his authorial intent.

In fact, it seems that Tandy even contorts Lewis's rhetoric into the argument that "Lewis did not set out to write at a particular stylistic level or texture; rather, he maintained that an author's style must be molded and modified to meet the needs of his particular audience" (83). Just a few pages earlier, Tandy had written, "Given Lewis's audience and the rhetorical purpose in his religious writings, such informal diction is not surprising. What not so many critics seem to have noticed, however, is the extent to which informality remains a quality of Lewis's prose when he turns to works of scholarship" (74). Just because Lewis may not have "molded and modified" his message to "meet the needs of his audience" as much as Tandy suggests does not make Lewis any less rhetorical than if he had.

What it does illuminate is the particular historical conception of rhetoric that Lewis utilized. Again, Lewis's conception of audience seems more similar to the nineteenth century rhetorical theory of Blair and Whately rather than a classical conception. Whately himself was a Christian apologist, and in his *Elements of Rhetoric* (1828), he writes, "It is indeed highly expedient to bring forward evidences to establish the divine origin of Christianity: but it ought to be more carefully kept in mind than is done by most writers, til some hypothesis should be framed to account for the origin of Christianity by human means." One of the problems here may be Tandy's source on classical rhetoric. Throughout the book, Tandy cites the undergraduate textbook, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* for definitions and analysis, rather than any primary texts. Once again, Tandy fails to utilize his own argument on the importance of historical period by choosing definitions that have expressly been modified for a contemporary audience.

Not only does Tandy seem bent on making Lewis's prose fit his argument but also seems to avoid terms that may, in his mind, diminish Lewis's influence. In Tandy's attempt to place

Lewis's style among the three classical styles—plain, middle, and grand—Tandy writes, "Although the term, plain style, is an elusive one, critics have often used it to describe a style characterized by simple diction and sentence structure, one that avoids for the most part rhetorical figures and highly emotive or elevated language" (78). However, the most significant part of Tandy's own study is his application of rhetorical figures to Lewis's writing: *alliteration* (96), *anadiplosis* (79,94, 100–101), *anaphora* (94, 99–100, 108), *antanaclasis* (97), *antimetabole* (94, 101–102, 115, 117), *antithesis* (79, 94, 99, 106–108, 109,114, 115), *aphorism* (79, 102–103, 110–112, 114, 117, 123), and that is just the beginning of his admirable and thorough treatment of rhetorical figures. His treatment, therefore, of the excessive use of rhetorical figures in Lewis's writing seems less characteristic of the "plain" style and much more characteristic of the "middle" classical category, with its excessive use of figures and its emphasis on charming its readers into understanding. Rather than this seemingly easy identification, however, Tandy writes, "Finally, while choosing generally to write in the plain style, Lewis refused to be enslaved to it and therefore varied his stylistic level and texture from extreme simplicity to complex and elevated syntactical structures" (82). Just because Lewis wrote in the "middle" style, does not make his writing less accessible to mass audiences, as the "plain" style implies. Tandy's work, therefore, demonstrates the need for a rhetorical study of Lewis that contextualizes him with the nineteenth century rhetoric that created him, rather than classical or a contemporary rhetoric that cannot.

ALZHEIMER LADY

She whispers to imaginary birds,
She waits for buses she can never ride,
She has a secret place where she can hide,
She thinks she knows a song, but not the words.
An old stone lady in the nursing home,
A broken flower in her gentle way,
Is it tomorrow or yesterday?
Her whole life is lost music, a lost poem,
She wanders everywhere with her old cane,
A quaint survivor in her ninety years.
She has a lot of bonus time for tears.
She does not know her suffering or her pain,
In her dim world she smiles at everyone,
A broken flower living in the sun.

Marion Schoeberlein

The Fullness of Time

Originally Published December 1956

Walter E. Bauer

When this issue of the Cresset is "put to bed" another Advent season will be upon us. But except for Christians in the liturgical tradition, this season will once again go by unobserved, indeed largely without any awareness of its existence. This is one of the tragic consequences of a Protestant tendency to cut loose from historic Christianity. For the season of Advent serves to emphasize a most significant truth. I reminds us that while the Incarnation was a "discontinuous" event in history, it was also an event "continuous" with what went before and what followed after. In simple, Biblical language its theme is the declaration of St. Paul in Galatians: "When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

A complete comprehension of the "fullness of time" is, of course, out of the question, since even the best informed student of the history of salvation possesses little more than fragmentary knowledge. But even an elementary knowledge of sacred and secular history suffices to illuminate this aspect of the divine plan for the redemption of mankind.

There was nothing accidental about the time of the Incarnation, as there was nothing accidental about anything in the life and work of the Savior. Everything was according to plan. The time was ripe for the birth of Jesus. Mankind had arrived at that point in history at which the Old Dispensation had run its course. One of the divine purposes of this dispensation was to permit mankind to demonstrate to itself its complete inability to redeem itself under the law, by moral effort. Jew and Gentile were to have full scope and sway to work out their own salvation, to carry out the injunction, "This do, and thou shalt live."

Nothing in all history is at once so sublime and so tragic as the efforts of ancient man to grope his way out of darkness into light, to find a solution of the problem created by sin, to free himself from guilt and fear. But the more he tried the more he failed, and everywhere, except for the increasing light of prophecy, there was increasing darkness. Everywhere there was degeneration, deviation from what is right and good. This degeneration manifested itself in all the superstitions and crimes and vices of which only a fallen angel is capable. At its best, the culture of ancient man ended in failure and destruction. If ever a people was highly endowed with intellectual and emotional qualities, it was the people of ancient Greece. But despite magnificent achievements of mind and heart and hand, despite many brilliant insights, they too failed miserably to work out their own salvation, to find the peace that passeth understanding. Indeed, it was with such as these in mind that Isaiah wrote, "Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people."

> When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.
>
> Galatians 4:4–5

And the darkness was greatest just before the dawn. How great it was is apparent from St. Paul's terrific indictment of ancient culture. In his letter

to the Romans he describes the "gross darkness" that had enshrouded the world. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. . .Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever." And much else, including the lowest forms of perversion. Indeed, the virtues of the ancient world had come to be shining vices. One cannot read the story of Hellenistic civilization without a sense of approaching doom, without an increasing awareness of moral and spiritual bankruptcy.

This indictment of human culture without Christ is a refutation of the theory of spiritual progress, the theory that there is some inherent force at work in human society which necessarily makes for progress from darkness to light, from polytheism to monotheism, from animism to ethics. The opposite is true, as our age has every reason to know. Apart from the Word of God, mankind had steadily deteriorated. The image of God had become more and more blurred. Darkness—gross darkness—had covered the earth.

As we approach again the miracle and the mystery of the Nativity, let us be grateful for the blessed truth which is the theme of the Advent season. Living in the "fullness of time" let us, like John the Baptist, bear witness of that "true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

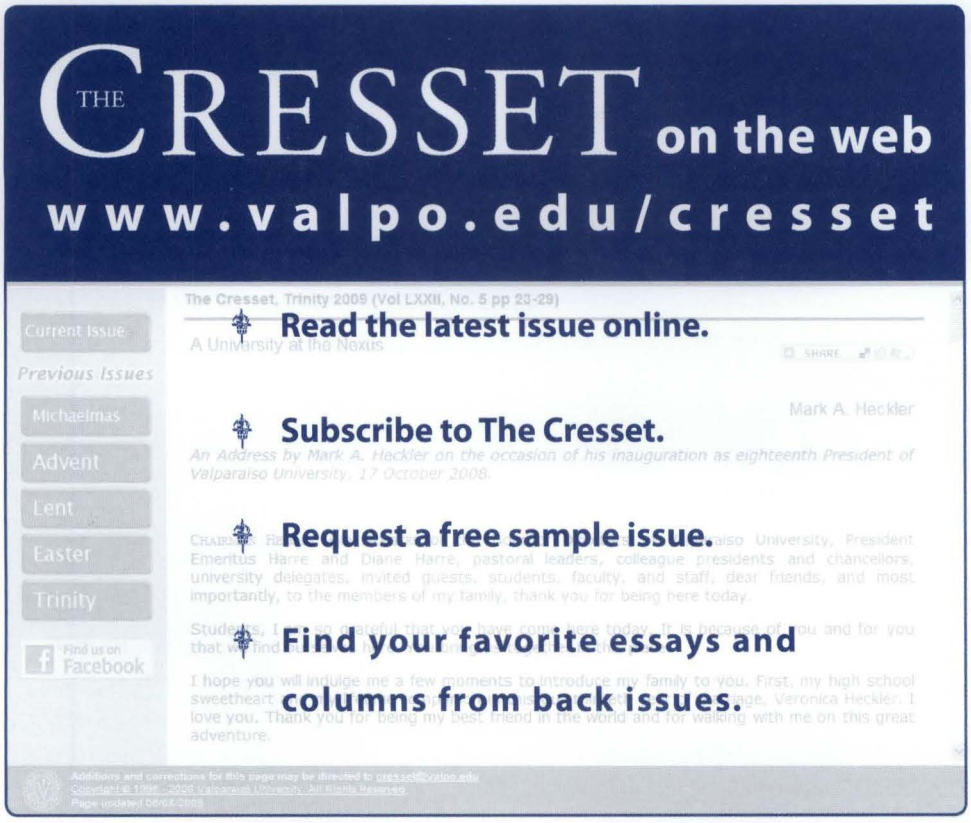
FORECAST

1)
Two housewives gossip as the bridesmaids
waltz. The cake, they buzz. The flowers.
Marriage has left them disappointed,
but each takes off in faith, a fragile skater
on thin ice, crying, You'll find happiness!
as the couple drives off.

2) I see Hells Angels
in my rearview mirror, regular bad-ass
foul-mouthed thugs gunning their cycles,
spread-eagled in black, their arms out-stretched
as if in crucifixion. They pull over
beside a stranded car, as, horrified, I watch,
expecting carnage. They hand the guy water.

Oh, the mind's a willful pessimist
but sometimes you can find a fragile flower—
the only one surviving winter frost.

Jeanne Murray Walker



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ON POETS

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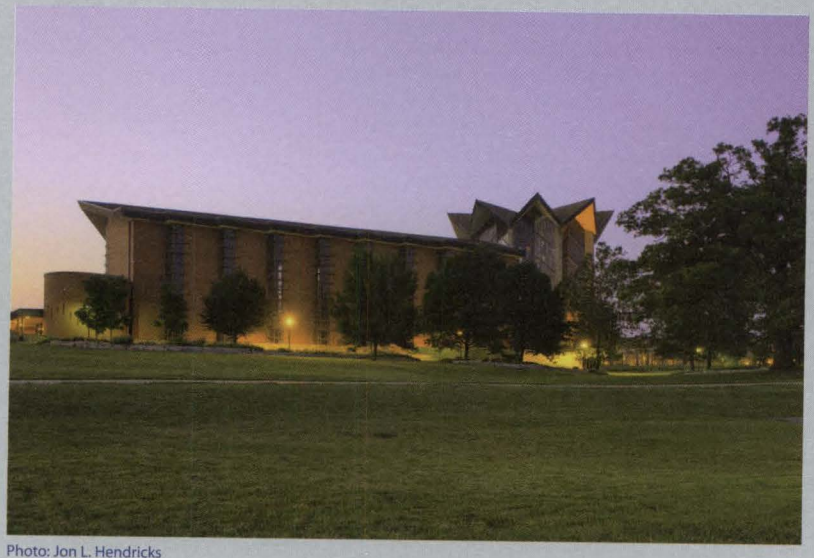
THE CRESSET

IN THE NEXT ISSUE



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The Incarnational Vision of
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Letting Go:
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